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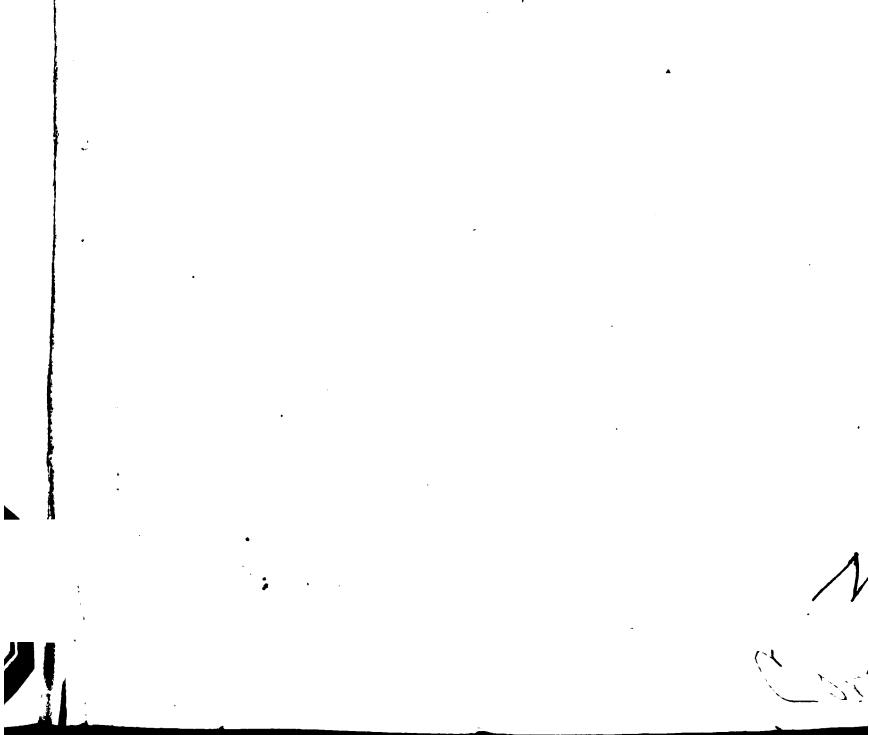
TOWER
OR
THRONE

*A romance of
the girlhood of
ELIZABETH*

HARRIET T.
COMSTOCK

to Clegg's letter, written for
the Times, 1803, 1804, 1805.

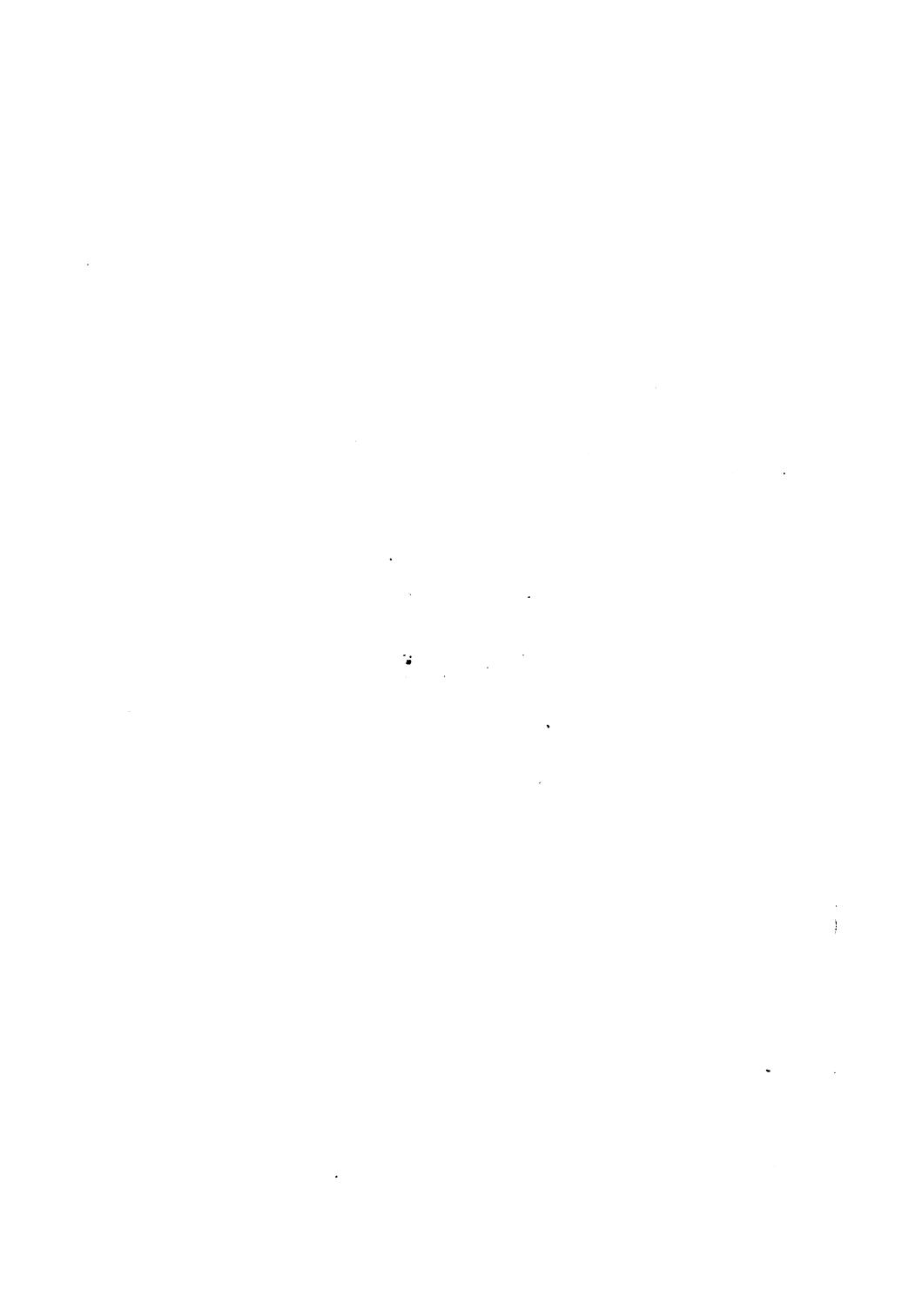
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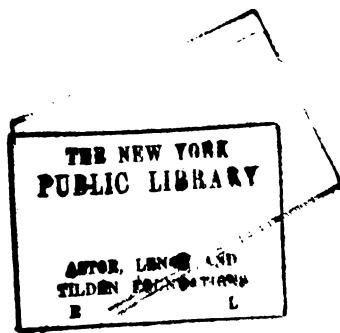




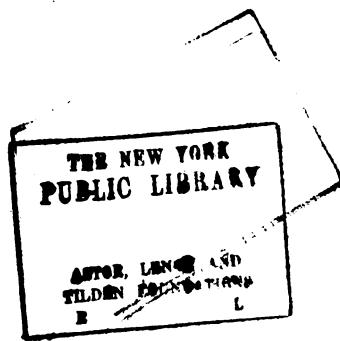


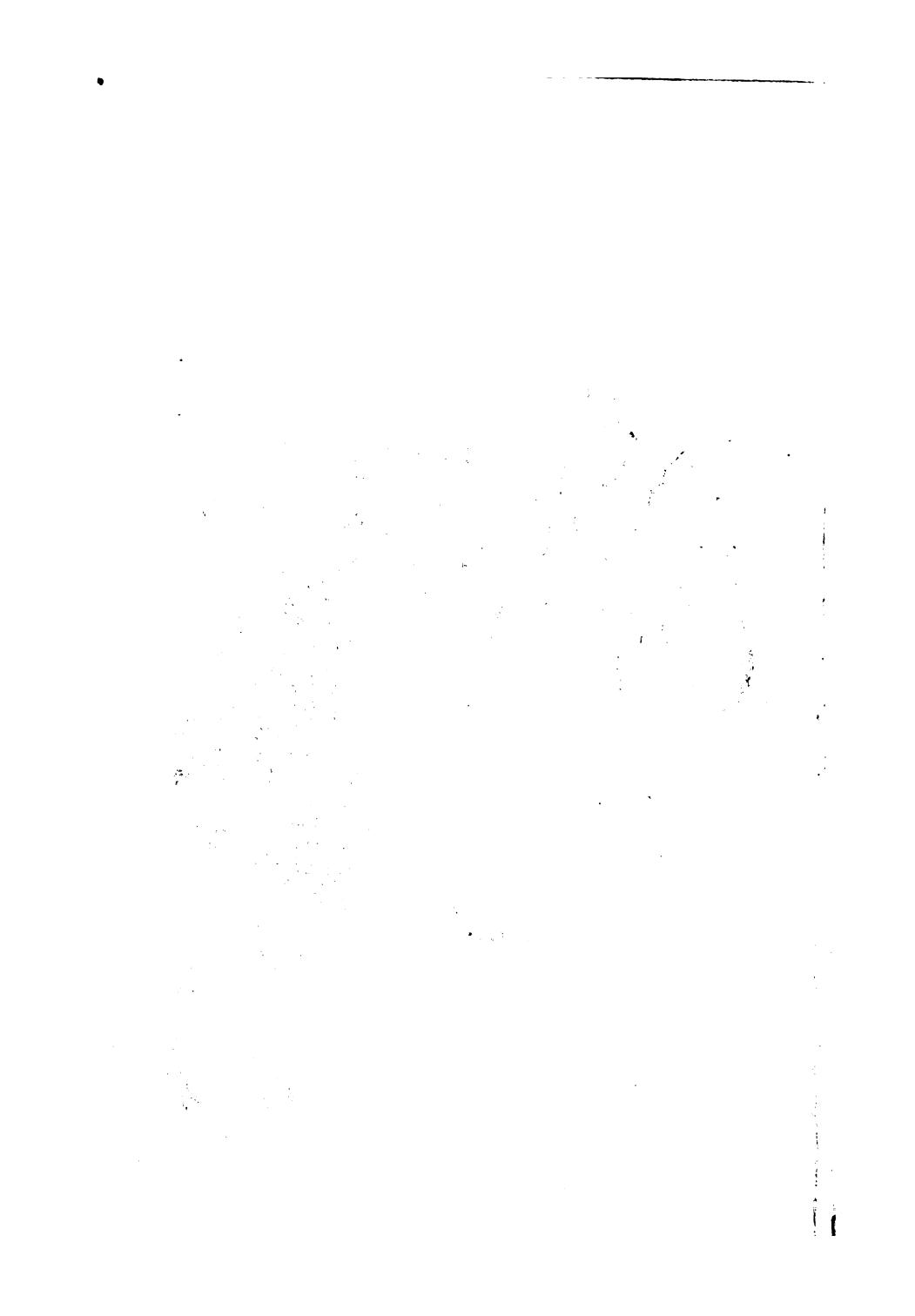
TOWER OR THRONE











TOWER OR THRONE

*A Romance of the Girlhood
of Elizabeth*

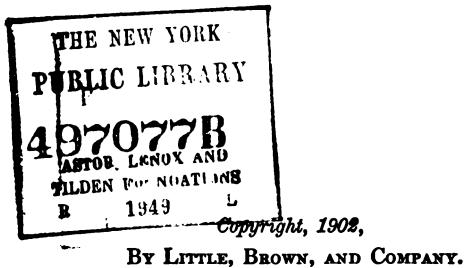
BY
HARRIET T. COMSTOCK

Author of "Cedric the Saxon," "A Boy of a Thousand
Years Ago," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
HARRIET ROOSEVELT RICHARDS



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THIS BOOK
IS LOVINGLY SUBSCRIBED
TO
MY HUSBAND
WHOSE PERFECT SYMPATHY AND WISE CO-OPERATION
WITH ME IN THE MAKING OF IT HAS
BEEN A DAILY BLESSING
ON MY WORK

NOTE

WANDERING back along the road of history, seeking that pleasant time in which the "little faire ladye, Elizabeth" had her day, I come upon milestones firmly erected beside the oft-time rugged way. At such a date, the little maid was born ; at such and such a place she was bred and tutored. I scan the stones with reverent gaze, and thank the patient hands that placed them there. But who shall say me nay if, between these unerring guides, I follow my own untrodden ways and try to trace, by fancy led, the life of this young girl who was not always the princess or the queen ? If I portray her as enjoying life, or as suffering its disappointments as a simple maid, it is with no wish to lightly disregard the facts, but with a strong desire to make you love one to whom history has not always been kind.

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TOWER OR THRONE

CHAPTER ONE

THE SIGNAL

UPON a wild March night, nearly three hundred years ago, a man lurked under a window of a gloomy castle, and awaited a signal from one within.

It was a bitter night, and, as the man crouched close to the wall, he muttered to himself, and ground his teeth in impatient fury.

At last, when three o'clock of the morning had passed, the window above was opened and a woman's hand, slim and white, dropped down through the gloom a sapphire ring. No word was spoken, the shining circlet was enough. The watcher groped for and found the signal in the grasses at his feet; then he mounted, with all speed, a horse which had been tethered near by, and rode like mad through the storm and darkness, to bear the news to Scotland's king, that Elizabeth, the mighty queen, was dead; and that he now reigned in her stead.

Long had Elizabeth worn the crown, and she had grown very weary, but, before life had become

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such a burdensome thing to her, she had been a bright, joyous girl; and of her, as the little lady Elizabeth, whose "errors did seem but marks of surprising endowments," I am going to tell you in story fashion. I would have you know and love her, not as the great queen who ruled so mightily,—not always wisely or gently,—but as the little English maid of royal Tudor stock, who strove to learn, that she might overcome error, and who, through much injustice to herself, was ever true and affectionate to them who served her well; and to the end was loyal to her name and country.

Now, in Greenwich Palace, on a certain Sunday afternoon, just as the late sun gleamed through the high window, my little "faire ladye" was born.

All around the walls of this palace chamber there were pictures of the Virgin and her Holy Child; they seemed to smile lovingly down upon the new baby; and the pretty queen-mother, nestling her tiny girl closer, forgot her disappointment that the baby was not a boy, and pressed a welcoming kiss upon the small fluffy head.

But how was the news to be broken to the king? Those in waiting shuddered at the thought. It would not do to delay too long, but who was brave enough to go into the outer chamber, and face the king's messengers with the tidings that a princess, instead of a prince, had been born to England's throne?

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They were anxiously waiting, those grave, serious men; and one bore in his hands a paper prepared by the king himself, to be filled out, as soon as the child was born, and then presented to the people.

At last, pretty Lady Mary of Norfolk, one of the queen's ladies, said that *she* would go and bear the news. Very humbly she entered the dim antechamber, and went up to the great earl who held the king's paper, and said softly, "The child lives, my lord, and is fair and strong."

"Thank God, a prince is born to England's throne to-day," cried his lordship.

"Nay, your Highness, 'tis no prince, but as sweet a little lady as did ever ope her eyes to gladsome day."

"A princess, my Lady Mary!" roared the earl, as loudly as he dared to roar, "a princess, do you say?"

"Aye, my lord."

"Then how am I to face the king? 'Tis as much as my head is worth." The old man was quite trembling. He unrolled the paper, so carefully prepared, and pointed to the space left vacant for the word "prince" or "princess."

"See you, my Lady Mary, so sure was his Majesty that the child would be a boy that the space is not large enough for the word 'princess.' What do you say to that?"

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Lady Mary hung her head, as if she alone were to blame for the dire misfortune that had befallen the empire.

"I think, my lord," she murmured hesitatingly, "that if you wrote very small, and squeezed the letters close together, you might get it in, and, besides," — here a brilliant inspiration seemed to seize her, — "you've got to get it in, you know, so you may just as well begin it!"

My lord moved angrily to a table near by, and sat down. Lady Mary gazed over his shoulder, while the awaiting courtiers held their breaths.

"P-r-i-n-c-e-s." The trembling hand held the quill rigidly; each letter was scrawled with nervous haste. As he reached the letter "s" my lord also reached the extreme limit of the space, then, with a fling of the pen, he turned to Lady Mary.

"What did I tell you?" he snapped. "There is no more room: my young princess must bear the consequences!"

Mary scanned the document critically. "Oh, well!" she sighed, "what matters? Perhaps she will be more than a prince, and only little less a princess, because of the loss of one letter. Let it go, my lord, and hasten to his Majesty; tell him the little maid is wondrous fair to look upon, and certainly favors her royal father!"

Well did Mary of Norfolk know her king! By that speech she may have won from Henry VIII.'s

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disappointment a kinder thought; be that as it may, the king did most of his frowning in private, while publicly he arranged to have as regal a christening for the baby girl as if she had been a wise little heir, and had made it possible for the old earl to have left off the one "s" he had been obliged to put in the narrow space.

Oh, what a christening it was! The sun shone down in golden blessing. The river was ablaze with the glittering uniforms of lords and gentlemen who rowed down from London town to attend the great affair.

The ceremony was held in Grey Friars Convent, and all the afternoon it lasted. Trumpets sounded and candles flared; with all the pomp of the Romish Church, to the wee lady was given the name of — Elizabeth!

Then, while all the assemblage listened, a knight in magnificent apparel cried aloud: “‘God, of His infinite goodness, send a prosperous life and long to the high and mighty princess of England — Elizabeth!’” The words echoed through the arches and naves; the sleeping child awoke and cried pitifully that all this commotion should disturb her slumbers. But the trumpets drowned the small voice, and the Duchess of Norfolk, who bore the princess in her arms, turned to join the king’s men, who were waiting at the door, and the royal procession wound its way back to the palace.

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Night had fallen, and the flickering torches guided the tired feet of royalty. At the entrance to the queen's apartment, they halted, and only young Mary of Norfolk entered, bearing in her arms the little lady, who was now sweetly sleeping.

The queen looked up with a glad eager glance, and stretched her arms out for the baby.

"Did they do her honor?" she questioned, kissing the child's dimpled hand.

"Aye, Anne," laughed Lady Mary; "such splendor was never seen before."

"But Katherine of Arragon's child, the Princess Mary, was her christening not as splendid?" asked the queen.

"T was naught, compared to this. I heard my Lord of Essex say the same to-day."

"My little one has won the king her father!" Anne exclaimed exultingly, "and that bespeaks honor for me, my friend. Oh, I trust that Katherine of Arragon may hear of the doings of this day — and understand."

A shadow flitted over the queen's face. "I should not feel hatred to-day, of all days," she whispered; "but oh, nothing must stand between my little one, and — and the throne!" Then her tired voice faltered. "List you, Mary, I have had a strange dream. It was set to the music of the trumpeters who were blazoning my dear one's triumph abroad. The dream has brought to my

THE SIGNAL

mind something which happened long ago. For sport, I once traced my future in a book of prophecy. It said, did I mount the throne, my head would lie in the dust. Even then I took little heed to such idle play, but I remember saying that gladly would I pay the forfeit could I but wear England's crown. My dream of to-day troubles me. I saw my little one left alone amid a cruel conflict, for, oh, Mary, my head was indeed lying low. I was not near to shield her!"

"There, there, dear Anne!" coaxed Lady Mary, for the queen's tears were falling like summer rain: "sleep, and forget this foolish dream. You, alone, reign in the heart of Henry Tudor. To honor you above the divorced Katherine and *her* child, he has promised to proclaim Elizabeth Princess of Wales! There! what think you of that, my Queen Anne?"

"Do you speak seriously?" panted Anne, her tears turned to sunshine.

"Aye, 't is common talk. Now take your high and mighty Elizabeth," the sounding title turned to fun upon sweet Mary's lips; "to me, she looks much like other babies, but to you she is all in all. Sleep, Anne, sleep."

So, with the pictures of the Holy Mother gazing gently upon them, England's proud queen and the weary baby slept.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIRST CLOUD

ANNE BOLEYN forgot her dream, and the little lady Elizabeth grew fairer with each day. So they began their new life together in Henry's Court. The queen, with an anxiety born of her experience, began at once to plan for her baby's future. The small princess herself, with a wondrous quickness from the first made known her desires, and demanded her rights from the king down.

Her august father could not quite smother his disappointment because she was a girl; but he was obliged to admire her strength and beauty.

“To waste such a brow and eye upon a lass!” he would often grumble, “it is a shame. Were she a boy, I swear the world would yet tremble before England's monarch!”

Henry did not begrudge beauty to any woman, but it was not beauty alone which shone from the baby princess's face. At times the king seemed to see in those tiny features a prophecy of what she would one day be, and what he should have been.

THE FIRST CLOUD

His Majesty chafed and fumed every time he glanced at the broad, open brow and the clear, keen eye. Every flash of growing thought on the little face bespoke power and will. When she was yet very young, she smiled up at him,—a slow, doubting smile, as if she recognized in him her friend and helper, and yet but half trusted that this was so.

One day the king came upon the queen sitting 'neath the shade of an avenue of stately oaks. The little Elizabeth lay crooning in her arms. The sight pleased yet annoyed the king. He saw that Anne Boleyn had never looked lovelier, but she had put aside every queenly trick of dress, and such touches were ever dear to Henry's love of show. "Surely, Anne," he said, drawing near, "you do look like a peasant woman, and little like the queen."

"Oh, Henry," she murmured, "I am as happy as a peasant woman. I begged my baby from the nurse. I carried her here myself. I am aweary, my lord, for although the child is but two months old, she is very, very heavy."

"Aye, too heavy for a girl. 'Tis a pitiful shame to waste so much good bone and muscle!"

"But she grows wondrous beautiful, my lord," smiled Anne; "come hither, and look her over well. 'Tis seldom that we have an hour alone together, wherein to be happy like commoner and luckier folk."

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Half frowning, Henry sat down beside the queen. The soft beauty of the mother and child touched him. He put an arm across Anne's shoulders, and with his other hand caressed the baby.

"You never wholly forgot your old life and home, sweetheart," whispered Henry: "courts have but gilded you; at heart you are still a simple country lass."

"Yea, your Majesty, 't was because I recalled Blickling Manor, my old childhood home, so clearly, that I stole here to-day with my little one. I grow weary, Henry, very often, and at such times this avenue of oaks does ease my heart. 'T is like the old home. I feel as if I were once more the simple girl I was, ere the Court of France and your Court did teach me an useless life."

"Useless, my love?" The king pondered.

"Yea, useless. And yet"—a dimple stole in Anne's cheek—"your sister Mary, my lord, and good Claude of France, tried to teach me that even a life at Court need not be wasted. If I err, 't is my own folly."

"Have you committed a folly in becoming England's Queen?" Henry frowned openly now, and his arm fell from his wife's shoulder.

"But am I queen?" The low voice sank still lower. "One came but yesterday from that sham

THE FIRST CLOUD

court which Katherine of Arragon does now uphold at Kimbolton, and he said that Katherine still asserts that her daughter, Mary, is your heir, and will reign after you. Oh! it drives me mad!"

"Who dares to say any one shall stand between you and the throne when I, even I, have raised you to my side?"

"Katherine of Arragon dares, my lord."

The queen watched the king's face from under her long lashes, and hugged her baby closer.

"Tis a shabby court that Katherine holds!" laughed Henry. "And as for Mary, she dwells apart from her mother, sweetheart, and, what with headache and neglect, my Princess Mary is but a sorry heir apparent. You need not fear Mary, my love. But to please you—" Henry's face flushed — "I shall proclaim that the gaunt Mary no longer holds the title of Princess of Wales. Your child shall take precedence over Katherine's daughter."

"Your promise, my lord?" In her eagerness Anne flushed and glowed. "And all for love of me! How great and good you are, my king!" Then gayly: "See, Henry, see Elizabeth: she smiles upon us both."

The princess was indeed smiling,—that strange, slow smile,—and her great eyes were fixed upon the two faces in a wondering gaze.

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"She has all your intellect, Henry." The king became bland at once.

"I am sure that a great mind will rule her heart and deeds. And, I think, my lord, that she inherits a little of the beauty which drew your lofty love to little Anne Boleyn."

"She is perfect as her mother," beamed Henry, basking in the worship which was ever grateful to his heart. "List, Anne, on your lovely hand, I swear loyalty to you, and our child Elizabeth, Princess of Wales!"

Now, indeed, did Anne Boleyn's sun seem in the ascendant. But as she laughed and whispered merry words to the cooing baby, a shadow fell athwart the path; she glanced up, and her brow darkened.

"Tis Jane Seymour," she faltered; "she always comes to ruin my happy hour."

"Fie, Anne! It ill becomes England's Queen to be jealous of her handmaiden. Jane is a merry little soul,"—the king had risen,— "and serves you well. Indeed, if I am not mistaken, she bears a message for you now. If I am right, your responsibilities will be lightened, and the Court will be permitted to do homage again to the queen."

"Oh, hasten, Jane!" cried Anne, forgetting her displeasure. "Pray tell us the news."

Jane Seymour came running down the avenue

THE FIRST CLOUD

of oaks, the glinting sunbeams making ruddy the waves of her wonderful hair.

"I find my king and queen together," she laughingly cried, drawing near, and dropping a courtesy; "with your royal permission"—she glanced at the king—"I will be seated. Even feet that bear good tidings weary, your Majesty."

"Be seated, Jane," nodded the king. "And now your news!"

"It is all arranged, as your Highness desired. It took much coaxing to bring the dowager Duchess of Norfolk to her senses, but she has at last promised to be state governess to the young Lady Elizabeth."

Anne drew herself up haughtily. "Since when, miss, have you assumed position entitling you to arrange my affairs?"

"I but obey his Majesty's commands," pouted Jane.

"Tis true." Henry waved his hand to still the dispute. "My words are not to be questioned. This is the plan. The Duchess of Norfolk is to take charge of Elizabeth's education; but until she is older our child is to be under the immediate care of Margaret Bryan, your kinswoman, Anne. Jane has arranged affairs admirably."

"Who is to be nurse, Jane?" asked Anne.

"Eliza Hokart, your Highness; a most skilled and goodly woman. And Eltham Manor, my

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lord, is ready whenever you desire to send my little lady there."

Jane's voice ceased. A deep silence followed, broken only by the gurglings of the wee princess as she laughed at the swaying leaves. At last the queen gasped, "And when, my lord, will it please your Highness to — to send my little lady?"

"To-morrow, Anne, the child is two months old."

"Why was I not consulted as to these arrangements?" The queen's voice shook, and her indignant eyes rested upon the downcast face of Jane Seymour.

"I am the king!" returned Henry, coldly; "the affairs of my kingdom and my household I am well able to settle."

"With Jane Seymour's aid, it seems." Oh, the bitterness of the tone! "I thank you, Jane, for serving me so generously."

"Tis my delight, your Highness." Nothing could equal the humility of Jane's voice, unless, perhaps, it was the lowering of her beautiful eyes.

The queen arose with her baby in her arms. She turned a haughty look upon the two before her.

"Have I your consent to be merely a mother until to-morrow robs me of the title? After that, I promise to be the queen only."

THE FIRST CLOUD

Jane and the king nodded.

Stately and proud, Anne passed down the avenue of oaks; never more truly a queen than now, when she was about to be deprived of her divine rights of motherhood.

With Katherine of Arragon holding her mimic court at Kimbolton; with the Princess Mary exiled, but still living; with Jane Seymour's shadow falling on the king's Court,—surely Anne Boleyn must assert her position, and make secure the future for the baby in her arms. "Princess of Wales!" she sobbed. "He has promised. And after that? Well, after that—Queen of England, my little one, even if my head falls in the struggle!"

CHAPTER THREE

MY LITTLE LADY PLEADS

THE bright May sunshine flooded down upon the old gray castle of Hunsdon. It tried to force an entrance into first one, then another vine-covered casement, but the grim shadows within drove it back. At last it succeeded in entering the window of a high tapestried chamber, and there it dallied, resting warmly and lovingly upon a little group.

On a broad couch lay a young girl. Her face bore the marks of almost constant suffering, and a bandage wrapped about her brow bespoke present pain.

Near her sat a gentle-faced lady, with a child of three or four at her knee. The little one was directing, in words and tones far older than her years warranted, the work the lady was doing.

The dancing sunbeams seemed finally to gather upon this little child, turning her tawny hair to rich auburn.

The girl upon the pillows gazed, sighed, and then raised a crucifix to her lips.

MY LITTLE LADY PLEADS

“And now, Margaret,” said the little maid, “put my crown upon my head; and, dear Mary, does my train hang *just* right?”

“I think so, Bess,” came the slow reply, “but ‘tis long since my eyes have looked upon a court robe.”

“Think not upon the past, Mary,” said the Lady Margaret Bryan; “a little child has led you into happier days.”

“Aye, happier if they last, Lady Margaret, but ‘t is the starving and the feasting that have wrought so upon me. But let it pass. Come, Bess, pray tell me, why are you ever playing at being queen?”

“Because I like queens, and some day,” the voice was amusingly confident, “some day I am going to be a real queen; my mother has said so.”

Lady Margaret, sitting near, began to grow restless; this little prattling child, so old for her baby years, was a serious responsibility to the elderly woman, who, in her desire to serve her kinswoman,—the present queen, Anne Boleyn,—was often distressed because of her sympathy for the deposed Katherine of Arragon and poor Princess Mary, who now, by the king’s order, was sharing the shabby splendor of the Castle of Hunsdon with the young Elizabeth.

“I do not want to be a make-believe queen like the one Lady Margaret took me to visit,” Eliza-

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beth babbled along, as she tried to readjust the toy crown on her sunny curls.

Princess Mary flushed and frowned.

“I did not know that Bess had ever seen my—my—” the girl faltered.

“I did not know the child remembered,” Margaret Bryan replied; “it was nearly a year ago. Elizabeth has a wonderful memory. ‘Twas by the king’s order, Mary, and at your mother’s desire.” This in a whisper.

“She often desired to see her own child,” the poor princess spoke bitterly, “but I never saw her after I was sent away.”

“There! there! dear child,” Lady Margaret drew near and smoothed the girl’s aching head. “She was wondrous kind to our little lady.”

“Yes,” Elizabeth broke in; “she told me such beautiful stories about Spain, and the time when she was a happy little girl. She told me to be kind to *her* little girl, and if I ever see her little girl—” the child’s voice grew tender—“I’m going to love her very much, because I liked the make-believe queen. The poor queen is dead now,—the sweet voice was pitiful;—“I am so sorry for the little girl!”

Princess Mary turned her face to the cushions, and Lady Margaret wiped her eyes.

“I wonder,—my little lady’s voice was merry again,—“why my mother never has me go to her

MY LITTLE LADY PLEADS

now? 'Tis very long since I saw her. We had such gay games on the grass with the pretty little dogs, and Jane Seymour was there. I do not like Jane very much, because my mother does not." Then, musingly, " Margaret, I want to see my mother; when may I go?"

A silence fell upon them, and the sunlight flickered on the dim tapestries.

" Here, child,"—Lady Margaret could bear no longer the strain my little lady's words were causing her,—" take this book and sit quietly in the window-seat until I return. Poor Mary wishes to sleep, I know; be a kind little maid, and keep guard. I will soon come."

Into the window-seat climbed Elizabeth,—the toy crown upon her head and the big book in her arms.

The shadows crept among the vines about the casement. Princess Mary fell into a troubled sleep, from which she started nervously. Not hearing Elizabeth, she thought that Lady Bryan had taken her away. And, the lady mistress herself having passed the door, and seeing Mary sleeping, and Elizabeth apparently absorbed in her book, had again departed to attend to another matter.

The matter was no less than a message brought from Court, telling her that Anne Boleyn's brief reign was o'er, and ere another day should dawn and set, that sad queen would be no more.

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The blow which poor Lady Bryan had long feared, had fallen.

How could she ever face the two princesses again, and keep the cruel secret, which she had just been ordered to do by the king's messenger?

No wonder she forgot the suffering Mary and the little slumbering child upon the casement seat!

In the great, gloomy entrance-hall she paced in an agony of sorrow and fear. Suddenly she heard wheels without, and she clasped her hands in a new terror of anticipated evil.

The heavy doors were flung back, and in from the night and vapor a tall woman rushed, and came directly toward the frightened Margaret.

The stranger threw back the hood which had hidden her face, and then in a whisper, that the waiting servants might not hear, she said, "I am Lady Kingston. I come from the queen!"

"The queen?" gasped Margaret; "oh, what of the queen?"

"I have a message for the Princess Mary. I must be back to the Tower before daybreak. Quick! tell no one of my presence, but take me to the princess."

Lady Bryan steadied herself, and beckoned Lady Kingston to follow. So they came to the chamber where the princesses were, but in that anxious hour no one thought of Elizabeth, and thus she dreamed on.

MY LITTLE LADY PLEADS

Princess Mary had never seen Lady Kingston, and she raised herself in alarm at the unexpected sight of a stranger.

"I come from the Queen," cried Lady Kingston, kneeling beside the couch; "she bade me kneel to you as I gave her message."

"Rise!" commanded Mary, in a cold, bitter tone; "no messenger from Anne Boleyn need kneel to me."

"Oh, heed me," pleaded Lady Kingston, "for I must bear your answer back to her. She prays forgiveness for all the wrongs she did you. She forgets not one."

"She has wronged beyond repair," groaned Mary.

"Say not so. Think of what she suffers! Think of her child!"

"Did she think of Katherine of Arragon's child?"

"Aye, I think she never forgot her. But now she is so changed. So gentle she has grown and so compassionate."

There was a stirring of the drapery by the window. The three women started, but not even then did the lady mistress or Princess Mary think of Elizabeth.

"Twas the night wind," murmured Lady Bryan, seeing Lady Kingston pause.

"Let me take your forgiveness to her, my dear

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Princess Mary ; it will soothe an hour bereft of all other solace, and to-morrow my poor mistress dies ! ”

At this, Princess Mary grew rigid, and her pain-filled eyes widened as she looked beyond the two women, whose backs were toward the window.

“ See ! ” she gasped, “ t is little Bess ! ”

The women turned, with a smothered moan.

The little white-clad figure came toward them, the dream-light still lingering in her eyes, and a pretty smile upon her lips. In her hands she bore the toy crown that Lady Margaret had lately made, and the mimic train trailed far behind.

“ T is the Lady Elizabeth ! ” cried Lady Kingston, and she bowed her head.

“ I have been dreaming about my mamma,” said the child, drawing near, and nestling shyly against Mary’s couch. The stranger puzzled her. “ Then I waked up, and heard about the poor lady who is going to die. Why will you not forgive her, dear Mary ? What has she done to you ? ”

The old, wise questions fell from the baby lips in startling distinctness.

“ I cannot tell you,” groaned Mary.

Then the child turned to Lady Kingston. “ Tell the poor woman Mary is ill. Mary will forgive her when she is well. Mary is very kind ; and oh, so very good ! Why, she prays to the

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dear God all the time." Then a new thought flashed into the intelligent little face: "Go to the king, my father, he will not let the poor lady die," the baby lips quivered. "The king can do anything!"

The three listeners sobbed aloud.

"For your sake," Princess Mary drew Elizabeth nearer, "I forgive. Go, my Lady Kingston, and tell your—mistress, I forgive the past for the sake of the little Lady Elizabeth!"

"Good Mary!" cried the delighted child, "see, you shall wear my crown!" She placed the toy on the princess' head, jumping upon the couch as she did so.

"Now Mary is the queen, she will forgive everybody, for she's a dear, good queen!"

With bowed head Lady Bryan led the weeping message-bearer away. There was much to be done, and time was so pitifully short.

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Princess Mary grew gloomier. For herself what did it matter? She had known poverty and disgrace before. There was a certain joy in appearing a martyr. And to the martyr attitude was now added the halo of a saint also; for Mary thought in her forgiveness of Anne Boleyn she had placed herself above ordinary mortals.

The subject was never mentioned. The king's orders on that head were plain and severe. But Mary thought much.

In the mean time, my little lady, fluttering in rags, and thriving upon neglect,—and a mixture of respect and servility,—was having a most enjoyable time.

The order and dignity of Margaret's reign were cast aside. No more lessons for fair Bess, unless she chose to have them to please her still beloved Margaret; but unrestrained frolics in castle, park, and stables. The hostlers and grooms became her companions and instructors, and all this by permission of my Lord Shelton, who realized, only too well, how pleasing it would be to the queen. Yet my lord had another side to consider. Queens reigned not overlong in England. There might be something beyond Jane Seymour. What then?

My lord had once consulted an old monk; his lordship pinned his faith to seers. This man had told him that, after a troubled time, and many

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rulers, one would sit upon England's throne long and royally. The monk had described the young Elizabeth so accurately that the superstitious lord felt little doubt as to who the merry queen was to be. And so he looked to his ways. He must serve Jane Seymour, but he must stand well in the graces of the "faire ladye" Elizabeth.

The child was quick to respond to affection or compliment; she was sunny-tempered and joyous. What cared she for rags and tatters if she could have her own way, do just what she pleased, and win praise and approval withal?

The familiarity of the servants did not shock her baby mind. She ordered them about, swearing at them in their own words, did they question or laugh. Lord Shelton looked on, highly amused. It mattered little to him what sort of queen ruled in that far off merry time, but it did greatly matter that he stood high in her favor; and high he meant to stand.

"I care not for the needle," said Elizabeth one day to Lady Bryan, "but I love you, Margaret, and I enjoy my lessons. No one is ever going to know more than I when I am queen."

This always made Mary wince.

"Oh, but I shall be a great queen, and I am going to make Lord Shelton my strongest knight. I have it all planned."

"Poor little maid!" sighed Lady Bryan, "a

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sad queen you will be unless you become a good woman. Learn obedience. Have an humble spirit. God will order your future."

"I care not for an humble spirit, and I choose to order my own future," laughed Elizabeth. "See, Mary has an humble spirit, and it makes her head ache, and her eyes red. I'm going to be like my father. I shall cry out thus and so, and no one shall say me nay."

"Belike your soul will be lost!" groaned Mary.

"I care not. My Lord Shelton says—" here Elizabeth dropped her bit of embroidery in order to make the declaration more startling,—"my lord has just told me that, if I choose, I may sit at his table henceforth, and—I do choose!"

"My lady!" poor Margaret was aghast at this new departure.

"Yea, I shall, Margaret," the defiant child went on; "I like not the poor food that is served on our board. The same is served in the servants' hall; I went to see. At my lord's table the fare is finer, and—" here a side glance at Mary—"we are to have no prayers. I may call for what I want, and say what I please. My lord says it is all in my training."

"Oh, what shall I do? To whom turn?" cried Lady Margaret. "I dare not address the king. The queen would laugh me to scorn. My dear Mary, help me!"

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“Why not consult the priest?” whispered the princess.

“My mother is the queen!” broke in Elizabeth, “and Lord Shelton says it is the queen’s desire for me to do just as I please.”

At this Margaret fell to weeping. She knew that her little charge was ignorant of all that had occurred; but at each evidence of the child’s innocence the good woman suffered afresh.

The speech touched even Mary’s indifferent nature. She said gently, “Sweet Bess, if you would please them who love you truest, you would heed Margaret, and not Lord Shelton.”

“I like my lord,” returned the child, shaking her sunny curls, “he is such a merry lord. I like a joyful friend.”

And, sure enough, that very night my lord gave command that the Lady Elizabeth — she was but five years old for all her quaint manner — was to sit at his board thenceforward, and no longer share Lady Bryan’s humbler and safer fare.

There had been a fox hunt that day, and Lord Shelton’s boon companions had ridden in late and muddy from their long sport. Without changing their attire, they had gathered in the banqueting hall to await his lordship’s entrance with the high and mighty Elizabeth. It was a great jest, and as they waited, the noble earls and young lordlings laughed and sang their jovial songs. Presently the

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doors were flung open, and in came the two belated ones,—my lord and the Princess of Wales! Lord Shelton had carefully arrayed himself in court dress; by his side strode my little lady, flushed and full of pride. She was dirty,—for in her horror of the event, Lady Bryan had omitted even a toilet for her charge,—the little gown was soiled and torn in places; for the princess had had a rare afternoon in the stables. One ragged shoe shuffled as she strode, with dignified step, beside her kinsman, and the hose hung wrinkled upon the small shapely legs. The sight was too much for the hilarious courtiers; they burst into roars of uncontrollable laughter.

With serious face, my lord lifted the little lady to her place at his right hand. The chair had been made high enough by adding a large book. This amused the princess vastly. “Tis a new use for books, my lord,” she said, with her ready wit.

“Aye. My Lady Elizabeth on the Scriptures,” added my lord, who had a humor of his own. But the jest was lost.

“Is it the Bible?” demanded Elizabeth, slipping to the floor, all her reverent training coming to her aid, “how dare you do such a thing, my lord?” Then, turning to a servant, “Take it away,” she commanded, “and bring me a stool.”

As the man glanced at his master and smiled,

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the child gave utterance to an oath that startled even that heedless company. The words fell with shocking familiarity from the sweet baby mouth, and a blank silence followed in the grim old hall.

“What ails them, my lord,” questioned the child in surprise, “have I rated you too madly? Remember, then, my lord, my good Margaret has taught me to reverence God’s holy word — and — I love Margaret.”

A flush of shame dyed Lord Shelton’s face. Then, as the steaming dishes of rich food were brought in, Elizabeth forgot her indignation and smiled upon the silent company.

She ordered from every platter a portion sufficient for a grown person. She fell to with a keen appetite, smacking her lips in delight at the savory flavors, and babbling impartially to the gentlemen gazing upon her.

“Wine!” she suddenly demanded, holding her glass aloft, “wine!”

Then, as the ruby liquid filled the cup, “Here’s to the king and good Queen Anne,” she cried. “Tis my father’s toast. I heard it once at Greenwich, and he permitted me to taste the wine. Drink, my lord, to your king, and Queen Anne, my dear mother!”

Lord Shelton rose trembling to his feet, the others following slowly. He raised his glass to answer the toast, but his arm had lost its power.

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"Drink, my lord!" again cried the child.
"Drink!"

"To the king!" groaned my lord. "To the king *and the queen!*" A murmured echo went around the board. Then my lord's arm fell, and the glass lay shattered in a dozen pieces, while the ruby wine made a gruesome stain upon the snowy cloth.

"Have you finished, my lady?" whispered Shelton at last; "it is past your bedtime." All the mirth of the hour was gone.

"My lord?" It was Lady Bryan who spoke. She had been an agonized onlooker from a hidden corner. No longer could she restrain herself. "My lord, have I your permission to take the Lady Elizabeth to her apartments?"

"Take her," he bowed low over his tiny cousin's dimpled hand. "Sleep well, my fair lady!"

Margaret gathered the tired child in her arms. The curly head nestled against the faithful breast.

"Margaret," cooed the sweet voice, "the food and wine were rarely good, and 't was a jolly meal, but—" the voice sank lower, "there is naught so good as your kind arms when I have grown aweary. Have I displeased you, dear Margaret?" For the tears which were flowing from Lady Bryan's eyes were falling on the princess' ruddy curls.

"Nay, sweetheart, but I would keep you by my side for your mother's sake."

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"But, Margaret, my mother wishes me to obey Lord Shelton. He says 't is the queen's desire."

"Oh, little one," in her pain, Margaret forgot even her fear of the king's wrath, "your own mother bides not at Greenwich now; she has gone—to another court. A new queen reigns, and her wishes for you are not wise, my own dearie."

Elizabeth leaned back in Margaret's arms, and scanned the sorrowful face.

"My mother gone to another court," she faltered, "and another queen at Greenwich! Margaret, to what court has my mother gone, and when will she return?"

Lady Bryan was thoroughly frightened now, and hastened to retract her careless words.

"Forget my idle talk, my own lamb," she whispered; "your father will tell you in his own good time. Speak not of it, or it might anger him. Your mother is happy, little maid; you will surely see her again. Now, Margaret herself will disrobe you to-night, and she will sing your favorite hymn. Forget the day and its cares, little lass. Come off, wee tired shoes." Margaret strove by playfulness to distract the child, but Elizabeth kept repeating until she fell asleep: "When will my dear mother come back to Greenwich, Margaret? I want very much to see my pretty mamma."

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For a few weeks more my little lady sported at Lord Shelton's side, through castle park and stable yard. She ate rich food at his table, and joined in the rough laughter over the wine; then Lady Bryan and even the listless Mary could stand it no longer. Daring all, they wrote to the king and begged him to dismiss Lord Shelton, and to investigate the condition of the shabby Court at Hunsdon.

The king hearkened to the letters, and then announced briefly that her little ladyship should be summoned to court, and the king would observe for himself.

CHAPTER FIVE

MY LITTLE LADY GOES TO COURT

NOW, when the king's decree reached Hunsdon, it was to the effect that Elizabeth should come up to Greenwich to salute the queen,—her mother.

Her little ladyship was all agog at the news, and almost beside herself with joy at the thought that she was again to visit her own sweet mother after all the long separation. Her memory of the half sad, half merry Anne was growing blurred. The time had been so long, but the childish heart was faithful. She recalled the events of her occasional visits to the queen-mother. She remembered the romps in the park under the tall oaks, where most her mother loved to be. She smiled to think of the little dogs who were her mother's constant companions, and who were so jealous of her. It was not the *queen* that my little lady remembered, but the gentle mother, who led her by the hand under the spreading trees, or through dim, unused corridors of the castle on winter nights; and told her of the dear childhood home of Blick-

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ling Manor, where she, the big, big mamma, had been a merry little maid, *just* like Elizabeth. There were tales of joyous games and mad pranks, and there was one tale of a weird ancestor who walked by night through Blickling chambers, searching ever for a little girl, who was some day to be a queen. That story had clung to the baby memory. Of course the ancestor found the little maid at last, and it was Anne, her own precious mother! Elizabeth repeated the story now to Lady Bryan, as that faithful friend was arranging her little ladyship's scant wardrobe, preparatory to her flitting to Court.

"Give her a new outfit," tremblingly suggested Lord Shelton; "I will pay for it myself." My lord was sorely anxious since the king's order had come.

"Her Grace is to go at once, and as she is!" Margaret, feeling confident of herself now, quite awed the worried lord with her dignity.

Shelton dared not interfere.

Then, too, the child's innocent prattle about her mother unnerved them both. They dared not prepare her for the terrible awakening which they knew awaited her when she saw Jane Seymour in her mother's place.

They had obeyed the king, but, oh, how they both pitied the little maid!

"I am so glad my mother has come back to my

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father's Court!" cried the merry child. "She will tell me all about her journey, and she will repeat the old tales. Dear Margaret," the excited voice dropped, "sometimes I have been afraid I should never see my mamma again. I was fearful lest she might enjoy herself too much, and might not care to come back. I shall ask her first of all for the ghost story. I cannot recall whether the ancestor wept or smiled when at last she found the little girl who was to be a queen."

"I think the tale goes that she wept," said Lord Shelton.

"Nay, nay, my lord," cried Margaret, "how you mar a childish tale! She smiled, my little lady, aye, she smiled joyfully, and blessed your dear mother."

"I think she did smile," mused the child, "but mother will tell me true."

And so, in due time, attended by a retinue of servants, sent down for the purpose from the king's household, her little Royal Highness, the Princess Elizabeth, went up to her father's Court, to pay homage to him and her mother.

Tidy and dainty was the little lady as good Margaret's hands could make her, but her gown was of the plainest and cheapest, albeit it was her very best. Little mattered that to the princess. Her proud heart beat high with triumph and anticipation.

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What sights she was to see! What tales she would have to tell Margaret and poor sick Mary, upon her return to Hunsdon!

She meant to ask her father to permit the Court physician to visit Mary, and cure her aching head. Perhaps no one had ever spoken of Mary to the king! She would set that right at once.

And she meant to ask for a velvet gown for Margaret; and some fine wine for Lord Shelton. My lord was so fond of good wine. And for herself,—what should she ask? Nothing. She was to have her dear mother again! That was enough for the hungry, faithful little heart.

The journey, with its noise and rough splendor, was over at last. Into Greenwich Palace came my small lady, her golden head held high, and her proud heart beating quickly under the coarse woollen gown.

By the king's command, she was to be brought at once into his presence, where he and the queen were awaiting her.

So, heralded by trumpets and shouts of "Long live the Princess Elizabeth!" she came to the magnificent antechamber, where Henry stood, with Jane Seymour by his side, surrounded by the gentlemen and ladies of his household.

The commotion dazed the little girl, for all her brave spirit. She felt very lonely as she clung to

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the hand of the great earl who was leading her forward between the lines of nobles, who had parted to let her pass.

She glanced about for her mother, knowing that all would be right when she saw that sweet face. Had she forgotten her mother? The thought wrung her heart; and yet surely she did not recognize her among the ladies standing near the king. Was it a jest? Were they testing her to see if she *did* remember?

She knew her father at once, and smiled up at him as she drew near. It was a wan, worried little smile, but full of friendliness.

The brave attempt at cheerfulness touched Henry pleasantly. And with pride he beheld how tall and strong she had grown.

“Elizabeth,” the king came a step forward, “I have sent for you to greet the queen, and to give homage to your—mother!”

My little lady knelt and kissed her father’s hand, then gave another troubled look around the group.

“Oh!” with a relieved sigh.

There was Jane Seymour! She remembered her perfectly. Jane would help her. So very gently she whispered, “Jane Seymour, I pray you, where is my mother?”

A deathlike stillness followed the pitiful question, while Elizabeth waited for the answer.

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Jane Seymour staggered, and turned a ghostly white. She gazed at the king in terror, and in abject dismay he returned the look. All at once he realized that his orders regarding secrecy pertaining to Anne Boleyn's death had been obeyed only too well.

"Where is my mother?" The timid question rang through the new queen's guilty soul like the cry of an avenging angel.

She seemed to stand before God's awful judgment seat, with Anne Boleyn's innocent child as her accuser.

At last Henry roused, and answered for her.

He drew the child closer.

"Have you not heard of your mother's death, my child? They have spared you the sorrow only to make you grieve now. Your mother died a year ago. This—" putting his hand on Jane's arm—"is your new mother—and your queen!"

The royal Tudor stock was all that saved my little lady in that hour. Generations of warrior blood rushed to the palpitating heart and reeling senses. For a moment the room and all the waiting courtiers swung around. Only the king and the white-faced queen stood firm before her.

Then the princess drew herself up, and, with a dangerous flash in her eye, gazed upon Jane Seymour.

In her childish mind, not realizing why, she

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recognized in the new queen the cause of all her woe.

"No one told me," she half sobbed; "I hope your Majesty will forgive me. I greet you." She knelt, as Margaret had drilled her, and kissed the queen's icy hand.

It was over at last. The trumpeters led the way back, and the Princess Elizabeth was placed in charge of the ladies of the queen's chamber.

What tears she shed, she shed alone. What pain tore her baby heart, none ever knew. She was too truly her father's child to permit the world to see her crushed.

Unconsciously she drew strength from a long line of kingly ancestors; she had been trained in a hard school, and she was old beyond her years.

One thought absorbed her lonely hours, and especially that hour known to all childish hearts, the seemingly endless hour before she fell asleep. Where did her mother die, and how? Where was her grave, and why had no one told her? Margaret must have known. Perhaps it was the heavenly court that Margaret had meant that far-off time. But why had kind Margaret not told her the truth?

One night, as she lay on her bed in the splendid chamber near the king's suite, a new thought or memory startled her. It came to her with such a shock that she sat upright in bed and groped

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with her tiny hands in the darkness, as if to grasp something tangible and do battle with it. It was the memory of the day when she had fallen asleep in the window at Hunsdon and had awakened in the twilight to hear the strange visitor pleading with the Princess Mary for forgiveness toward a poor lady who was about to die. It all became clear and connected. That was her dear mother!

She recalled Mary's words : "Tell her I forgive her for the sake of the Princess Elizabeth!"

They had meant her mother! That was why they had all cried.

The horror grew as the thought became a certainty.

There was naught in the brave child now to stay her in that terrible hour.

"Mamma!" she shrieked in the darkness; "it was my mamma!"

There was a stir in the outer passage, and a hurried whisper, "It is the Princess Elizabeth ; she has a troubling dream. If his Majesty inquires, pray tell him that I am with her little ladyship."

The chamber door was opened, then quickly closed, and in the terrifying darkness Elizabeth felt warm, tender arms around her.

"Hush thee, hush thee, little lassie ; tell me all thy fears. I am thy friend, poor little maid. I knew and loved thy mother. Tell me all thy troubles, sweet."

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Elizabeth sank into the unseen but friendly arms, and without a question sobbed out her doubts and fears.

Not once did the listener stay the flood of confidence; like a mother she smoothed the rumpled curls, and kissed again and again the hot little face.

Then, when only sobs followed the pitiful tale of wrong and fear, in a voice which Elizabeth never forgot, and which ever rang through all the future years whenever the name of Anne Boleyn came to the great Elizabeth, these words were whispered :

“Young as thou art, thou wilt understand, sweetheart. In the years to come I may not be near to aid thee; so store in thy mind that which I am going to tell thee. In the times of thy sorest need, draw upon thy memory of this night. Grieve not for thy mother, she died happy. Glad was she to go to a brighter world than this. She loved thee, precious, and spoke tenderly of thee always, though there were reasons that kept her from thee. She was never more a queen than when she died. She gave me this ring —” Elizabeth felt it upon the hand outstretched in the darkness—“because of my love for her. I was with her to the last.”

Then came a pause, as if the speaker were in doubt as to the best method in which to tell even

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this wise little maid what remained to be told. Time was short; there might never be another chance to impress what comfort there was in the sad tale upon that childish listener.

“Sweet, thy mother lies at Thorndon-on-the-Hill in Essex, though she died away from Court. We bore her body there at night, and under the stars we, who loved her well, buried her like a queen.”*

The sobs ceased; the small form grew quiet.

“I remember every word,” murmured my little lady. “I shall never forget. You are so good; who are you?”

“Thy friend, sweet little Elizabeth. Thy friend until death. I can tell thee no more now. If God grants it, I will be near thee, lassie, when thou mayst know it not. Sleep, my pretty one, sleep !”

Then, soft and low, she crooned an ancient Scottish air, better fitted for baby ears than the tale she had just related. So, soothed and comforted, my little lady slept, and the unknown friend glided back through the darkness to the life of Henry’s Court. Gone, but never to be forgotten.

CHAPTER SIX

THE KING AND HIS DAUGHTER

THE king, having at last been roused into considering his little daughter's welfare, meant to do it thoroughly.

It disturbed him not at all that poor Mary was neglected and ignored, she who should have been, according to her age, his first consideration. Elizabeth was another matter. Here was a princess worthy the name of Tudor. Nothing sickly or solemnly religious about young Bess. She was full of life and energy ; old beyond her years, and with a mind that grasped learning with a quickness unheard of before among the royal children.

The Princess of Wales, she might, perchance, rule some day, as well as a mere woman could, upon the throne of England. This was a bitter thought to Henry Tudor, and a bitterer one, if possible, to Queen Jane. Still, so far the king had held sacred his promise to Anne Boleyn, and Elizabeth was next in succession to himself.

To please his own love of show, he ordered a magnificent wardrobe for this infant Cinderella,

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and gave much thought to the amusing Princess of Wales.

This was wormwood to Jane Seymour, but she was wise enough to hold her peace while biding her time. It was better at least that Elizabeth should be kept in comparative privacy, even if she *were* with the king, than that she should be seen and honored by the Court. During this time Jane's thoughts ran back to the days when she and Anne Boleyn were little maids of honor at the Court of France, where poor Mary Tudor, the king's homesick sister, played at being wife to the old French king. Elizabeth reminded Jane of Anne in those days. She was but a little younger. How many weary years stretched between that time in France and now, and how she disliked the child of her who then had been her friend!

But what cared my lady for the queen's gloom and tempers? In the glory of her own sudden uplifting she was amiability itself. She strutted and plumed herself to her heart's content. There were moments, to be sure, when her laughter failed, as she tried to place among the Court ladies the one who had soothed her during the first sad night in the palace. But she could never be sure; so she clung to the memory with the love of her warm nature, and turned, with childish lightness of heart, to the joys of to-day.

She revelled in the pretty gowns, and wondered

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why she was not permitted to air them more publicly ; but Jane saw to it that as few as possible beheld this transformed princess. And, as for the king, laughable as it appears, he had turned his attention to the arranging of a suitable marriage for his daughter. There were no loose ends to be left, now that Henry had set himself to his fatherly task. He did not want to be bothered with these matters again. What if the princess *were* a baby? She would have to be married some day ; it might just as well be attended to now, along with the wardrobe.

It pleased his Majesty to have his daughter much with him alone on that visit. Her childish wit amused and surprised him. Often her quaint sayings caused him to let forth such peals of genuine mirth that the queen, looking from a safe distance, trembled with rage.

One morning the king found the little lady in the castle park, pacing slowly up and down the avenue of oaks so like a cathedral aisle, and which was Anne Boleyn's favorite walk. The father remembered, as perhaps Elizabeth had too, in choosing it, and a cloud gathered on Henry's brow. The princess held a bulky book in her arms, and with bowed head she was intently perusing the contents, sometimes spelling aloud a word too intricate for even her quick brain. The king eyed her, and gradually a smile chased the frown

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away. She was so very small, so laughably dignified, and so intensely studious.

"Ho! daughter," he called, "what fairy tale so claims your attention that you hear not the approach of your king?"

"'Tis no fairy story, sire," replied the child, raising to him her great solemn eyes, "'tis history."

"History?" roared Henry, "and what does history mean to an imp like you? Better be living your own history. Perhaps, my Bess, you may be Queen of England some day. Now, how does that strike your fancy?"

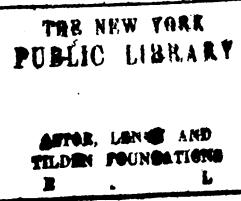
"Oh! 't is an old thought, my father," my little lady sighed long and wearily. "Kings' children are sure to reign. I read it in the books, and so I study history."

"God wot!" cried his Majesty. "What have we here? The brain of an ancient in the poll of a baby, and a girl at that. Heaven defend us! Sit you down, my daughter Bess, I have questions of state about which I desire to consult you. But first, you jade, tell me how history is going to help you to be a queen?"

Nothing loath, my little lady seated herself upon a rustic seat beside her father, and gave him her most serious attention.

"'Twill not help me to be a queen, sire, but 't will help me to be a wise and good queen."





THE KING AND HIS DAUGHTER

“Ha! ha! ha!” long laughed England’s monarch, until the startled birds took wing and flew away, but Henry’s possible successor never changed her sober expression.

“And in what way, pray tell me, oh, mighty Elizabeth?” The King wiped his overflowing eyes.

“Why,” very slowly and convincingly, “I read of all the mistakes the kings make. I commit them to memory, and I mean never to do one of them myself. Then, I study all their virtues; I mean to copy them; and — ” with the sage toss of the sunny curls — “I think I shall be a very remarkable queen !”

At this, Henry’s mirth became uncontrollable. He rocked from side to side in helpless laughter.

“Have you noticed any errors or virtues in me, Bess?” spluttered he.

“Oh, a great many. That is why I want to be such a good queen. It is for your sake and mine, also. I love you, father.”

The King’s laughter ceased. His heavy jaw dropped as he looked at his fearless comrade.

“You have been drilled to speak so!” he thundered. “By Heaven, your instructor shall pay dearly for this!”

“I thought it all out for myself,” mused Elizabeth, undismayed. “I have a great many thoughts; sometimes they make me very tired.” She sighed

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softly, and bent to clutch the book, which was slipping from her knee. "But I shall keep on thinking. I want to be the wisest woman on earth."

"Gad!" muttered Henry, bracing himself against a tree, "I almost fear you, you uncanny witch. Well, then, since you so fearlessly dare criticise your king and father, tell me my errors, or—" with an after-thought,—"a few of them."

The child gazed at him with a mixture of love and pity. Then, taking one of his great hands in her dimpled ones, she raised it to her lips, smiling meanwhile in the friendliest way.

"You always seem to be thinking of yourself first; what *you* like, and what *you* do not like;" the voice grew more tender. "A wise, good king should not do that, he should think of his people. I read it in all the books. And," here the low voice broke, "you do not take good care of your little girls, *always*. When I am queen I mean to be very kind to all who are weak and poor, and I am never going to send little girls away from their mothers."

"You talk like an oracle," whispered Henry, in an awed tone. "Who put such fancies in your head?"

"They are always there, sire, but they are not fancies;" then, so suddenly that the king started, she asked: "Can you tell me where poor Queen Katherine's little girl is?"

THE KING AND HIS DAUGHTER

“Why, why,” the dazed monarch floundered, amazed at the number of things which the princess did *not* know, “you—you have been living with Katherine of Arragon’s child. Has no one told you? The Princess Mary is at Hunsdon!”

“Princess Mary is Katherine of Arragon’s little girl!” Elizabeth had dropped the heavy book, and now stood with blazing eyes before her august father, while through the busy brain past memories and recent gossip struggled into connected thought.

“Then if Princess Mary is Katherine of Arragon’s little girl, she is yours also: I have but just been told that Katherine was once your queen. The Princess Mary is ill and lonely; she wears shabby clothes,—the angry child had forgotten her own recent neglect and wrongs,—“you leave her to suffer; you come not to see her; you are a cruel king!”

“Pray cease!” cried Henry, raising his hand as if to ward off a blow. “Turn your eyes away; you remind me of—of—Great heavens! that such a babe *dare* be my accuser! Who has so trained you that you come hither with your ancient speech and child face?” Then, drawing her nearer, his voice sinking to a whisper, he faltered: “Yet had I more like you, little maid, surrounding my throne, I might have been a better king.”

Silence fell between the two. Elizabeth thought

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her thoughts and frowned. Henry Tudor thought his, and sighed deeply.

Then slowly : “ I will think about — about the Princess Mary. I wish you to believe your father less cruel. And now there is another matter. I am contemplating arranging a marriage for you. How does that strike your high and mighty ladyship ? ”

“ I am too little,” quoth Elizabeth. And, indeed, she did look pitifully small and weak even with that old, wise look in her eyes. “ Do you not think, sire, you should consider the Princess Mary first ? She is much older than I.”

The laughter came back to Henry’s easy nature, and he smiled broadly.

“ The matter would be far more serious in the Princess Mary’s case,” he said. “ And as for age, my daughter, ’t is a thing a woman attains with remarkable speed. Now, what manner of husband would you choose, Elizabeth Tudor, when you shall have conquered your youth and have the world at your command ? ”

My little lady sat down again, and the frown upon her brow gave place to an expression of deep anxiety.

“ I have never thought upon this subject before ! ” she sighed heavily.

“ Then, by Heaven ! ” roared the king, “ I wot it is the only subject, my lady ! ”

THE KING AND HIS DAUGHTER

"I will not marry a fool!" Elizabeth began pointing off the requirements on her chubby fingers. "He must be learned, and he must think me the best of all women,—he must tell me so every day, and never say me nay when I wish yea."

"Now, as Heaven hears me, my Princess of Wales, if this paragon be above ground, I will search him out for you. Come hither, you small wiseacre; kiss me, Bess. You are a rare jade. Almost I find it in my heart to pity your future lord."

Perhaps a lurking memory of this conversation had something to do with the stipulations attending the negotiations of marriage Henry entered into soon after with the King of France. Be that as it may, England's monarch did request the French ruler to permit his third son (the one selected as a proper mate for the great Elizabeth) to be educated in England, under Henry's supervision. This demand dampened the ardor of the French King, and he withdrew from the business. Thus, at the age of five, the Princess of Wales was still on the matrimonial market.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A LITTLE PRINCE AT COURT

LOOK! Bess, who rides down from London way? Methinks I see horsemen." The Princess Mary shaded her near-sighted eyes with one thin hand, and gazed down the highway.

Elizabeth, weaving a chaplet of leaves, dropped her work, and looked eagerly in the direction Mary mentioned.

"Oh, 'tis many horsemen, sister Mary," cried the little maid, delightedly. "I warrant you they are from our father's Court with some great news." She danced about in glee, clinging to Mary's hand.

The two princesses, plainly dressed, were allowed by Mistress Bryan to walk abroad unattended. Since Lord Shelton's departure and Elizabeth's return from Court, Hunsdon had had a year of calm, healthy life.

The little lady, since her return, had been very tender toward the sister she had not known as such before. Mary appeared in a new light to her honest little heart. She was some one for

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Elizabeth — who meant to be such a good queen — to defend and protect. The attitude made even grim Mary smile at times, and as for Lady Bryan she never saw the two together but that her heart thrilled toward the loyal child.

"Are you sure they look like courtiers?" questioned Mary, her heart beating anxiously.

"Oh! quite sure. I think—" very slowly — "I think I remember the faces. I wonder if they will remember me?" Elizabeth drew herself up proudly, as old memories of past glory flashed upon her.

"I hope they do not," whispered Mary. "List you, Bess; let us bide here by the roadside 'neath this tree. Perchance they will take us for village maids. There is always some one ready to talk; we may learn much and so be prepared for whatever has happened. 'T is long since Court news has sifted down to Hunsdon."

"Oh, yes!" laughed Elizabeth. "'T will be great sport, sister Mary. See, let us go to this little spring; belike they may wish a drink of the cold water."

The two princesses shrank back from the roadside as the glittering cavalcade came on. The first riders, seeing the two by the way, halted: "Where lies Hunsdon?" cried one.

"Straight before you," replied Mary; "the castle gates are but a half mile beyond."

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On again dashed the brave horsemen.

“Tis Court news they bear,” quivered Elizabeth. “Oh, I cannot wait!” Then, as a boyish rider halted, seeing the sparkling spring, she cried: “Pray tell us, sir, what news you bring.”

“Have you not heard?” asked the boy. “Why, 't is the talk of the kingdom. His Majesty has a son, and we ride to announce the king's orders to the Ladies Mary and Elizabeth. I warrant,” here the boy laughed loudly, seeing that his comrades had passed on, “the princesses will gnash their teeth at the news. No hopes of the crown for them now. They are little better off than yourselves; perhaps not as well off, for they must eat their hearts out in disappointment.”

“T is great news indeed!” faltered Mary, then tremblingly, “Will you drink, my lord?”

“Many thanks,” replied the boy, bending down to take the cup from Mary's shaking hand. Then, looking closer at Elizabeth, he started and flushed. “Who, pray, are you, sweet maid?” he questioned huskily, a dim memory coming to him.

Frightened out of her intent by the news and Mary's manner, my little lady made reply very haughtily. “I am the Princess of Wales!” she said, “and this is the Princess Mary!”

The cup dropped from the boyish hand. “Pardon me,” he faltered; “if my Lord of Essex hears of this, I am done for!”

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"He shall not hear." Mary reassured him.
"Ride on, sir; we will follow."

With bowed head the lad galloped off. When he was out of sight Mary turned her haggard face toward her little sister.

"Too young are you, Bess," she groaned, "to fathom the depths of this news. Our hope is gone. Gone!" she moaned. "No longer are we heirs to the throne. The messenger spoke truly: we must eat our hearts out with disappointment." Tears were falling from Mary's eyes, tears of rage and chagrin. What she had hoped through all the long, empty years, who can tell? Whatever it had been, it was dead now. That little baby at Greenwich had thrust both sisters far from the throne.

"But oh, sister Mary," pleaded Elizabeth, "he is our little brother! I love babies, sister; I will ask our father to permit us to visit him. And—" here the small maid smiled bravely—"if we cannot be queens, we can teach him to be a great king. We are so old, you see. You can teach him to pray and be so good; and I—why, I can tell him about all he should do. I have studied a great deal while I thought I was going to be a queen."

"Come!" exclaimed Mary, "what a baby you are indeed. Come, let us learn all that these mighty lords have to say. We have only each other now, poor Bess!"

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The quiet castle was in an uproar when the two princesses dejectedly appeared. Lady Margaret was in tears. While all the kingdom was quivering with joy over the birth of the king's son, the lady mistress' faithful heart sank heavily. She had dreamed her dreams since Elizabeth's visit at Court, and, although the king had seemingly forgotten the child during the year which had passed, the hopes of a brilliant future for her precious charge had never died. As Mary saw, so Lady Bryan saw, that now all was changed, and only a dull, obscure fortune awaited the little lady.

But the king's men brought not only the news of the prince's birth. The king, in his rapture, had sent them to bring the two princesses up to Court, that they, too, might bend the knee to the heir of England's throne.

There was to be such a christening as the empire had never seen. It was to outshine Elizabeth's as day outshines the brilliant night. And all, all, from the proudest earl to poor, gaunt, neglected Mary, must do homage to the baby prince.

Lady Margaret had heart and hands full for the next day or two. Not only did Hunsdon have to entertain the great lords, but the princesses' wardrobes must be looked to. Elizabeth's robes were easily arranged. Chests were ransacked, and the finery of the year before was brought to light.

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My little lady had grown, to be sure, but by letting down here, and pinching her small ladyship there, the rich gowns were made possible. With the Princess Mary it was quite another matter. She had always been a veritable Cinderella, and in her gaunt young womanhood, gay apparel had no part.

"How can I go, Margaret?" she pleaded. "My father does this thing but to bring me to scorn. Fancy me," she laughed bitterly, "appearing at Court in my beggar gowns; I, the daughter of a hundred kings!" She raised her crucifix to her trembling lips, while her dull eyes flashed. "And yet, mayhap, among the throng there will be some who will remember Katherine of Arragon, and if so—well, they will pity her martyr daughter. I will go, Margaret, and you need not trouble about my gown."

And so, in due time, the royal party turned their faces toward Greenwich. The sisters rode side by side,—my little lady on a snowy pony, and poor Mary awkwardly mounted on a sorrel mare.

"You will see, sister Mary," said Elizabeth, "how the people will shout, when they see me, and cry out, 'Long live the Princess of Wales!'"

The elder princess smiled grimly. At last they neared Greenwich, and the crowds indeed were shouting, but not for the Princess of Wales.

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The bells were ringing, and the trumpeters flaring away; but few noticed the cavalcade in the midst of which rode the tired sisters.

“Have they forgotten me?” my little lady queried. She was so young to learn the bitter lesson.

“They have short memories, Bess,” sneered Mary.

Then the young lord, who had first broken to them the king’s news, rode beside Elizabeth. “My lady,” he said, bowing low his boyish head, “consider me your true knight. I have not forgotten the Princess Elizabeth, and I will serve her to my life’s end.”

The child dried her tears, and put forth a tiny hand for the boyish courtier to kiss. This was like the old days, and the proud heart was lifted.

All was excitement at Greenwich. Vast preparations were in progress, but the queen, where was she?

In all the tumult, her name was scarcely mentioned. A queen was no great matter, but an heir to Henry Tudor,—*that* was a subject to keep every tongue wagging.

Poor Jane, lying in her darkened chamber, listening to the torturing noise, had been informed that, sick or well, she must appear at the baby’s christening. Filled with pride and exultation,

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she was planning her robe of state, and trying to forget herself in her joy over her baby boy.

When the king saw Mary, his face was a study. He had not looked upon her for years. She had passed from childhood to unlovely womanhood, and her unattractiveness caused her father to shudder. His heart, however, was so full of satisfied ambition that he could even face the plain girl and confer a favor.

“Mary,” he said solemnly, “the Duke of Norfolk and you are to be sponsors for my son.”

“My father too greatly honors me,” whispered the girl, shrinking from the publicity.

“I have spoken,” replied Henry, waving her aside, “and in Heaven’s name let some one show you what to wear.”

“And now, Bess,” taking the little maid in his arms, “what think you of this new brother?”

“I have not seen him, father.”

“You shall to-morrow. And how about being a queen, my lady? All your study was in vain, you see.”

“Nay, sire, I shall show my little brother how to be a king.”

“Gad!” cried his Majesty, “was there ever such an undaunted maid?”

And so the day of the christening arrived. Queen Jane, upon a pallet, decked out in gorgeous

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robe, looked with wan, weary eyes upon the little prince, as he was borne by.

Then came the great Duke of Norfolk. He was none too well pleased that he had been chosen to walk side by side with the gaunt, sallow Mary, whose plain face never looked plainer than it then appeared above her rich gown.

Jane pitied the awkward girl. Motherhood had changed the queen. She could now afford to be generous. In her triumphant heart she vowed to be kinder to the two princesses in the future. Poor Queen Jane!

After the duke and Mary came Lord Seymour, the queen's brother, bearing in his arms his small companion. She really was too little to walk beside the tall lord, but the indignity made her face flush angrily. It was my lady the lord carried. She tried to hide her wounded pride, and waved a streamer of scarlet ribbon right merrily. The ribbon meant little to her; but, according to an old custom, it announced to all who saw it that Elizabeth the Great no longer had any pretensions to her father's throne.

Once the sight would have thrilled Jane Seymour's soul; now she turned away wearily. It seemed so cruel to permit the innocent little maid to proclaim her own humiliation. The slow tears gathered in the queen's great starry eyes, and, unheeded, the rest of the procession passed on.

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It was over at last, all the pomp and splendor.

The holy words had been spoken over the sleeping baby. He was to be known in England's history as Edward VI.—and so the heralds proclaimed it abroad.

On the return to the castle, Elizabeth walked beside Mary. "I shall make my Lord Seymour suffer for what he did to-day," she whispered haughtily. "He carried me as if I were a babe." Then, glancing back, she said to the stately Lady Herbert, who was carrying her miniature train, "Not so fast, my lady; I wish to walk slowly, so that people may see me on my feet."

Back to the queen's chamber the lords and ladies swept. The castle gates shut out the yelling crowds, and at last all left the apartment where the prince and his tired mother lay, except the attendants in charge.

As the days sped on, the revelry in the banqueting hall waxed louder and fiercer. Those who watched the queen, thinking, when she slept, that they would not be missed, often withdrew to look on, from afar, at the brilliant scene.

So England's queen and future king were sometimes unguarded. Then, in the loneliness, Jane Seymour would open her eyes, and shudder at the rough music and clanging bells.

She drew her baby nearer and kissed the tiny warm hand.

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The firelight flickered on the tapestried walls and made quaint shapes which shifted and changed. They drew close and hid the familiar objects in the room. The queen stared at them and saw them assume forms of old departed scenes. But they filled her with a sort of fear. How selfish and weak she had been! How unfitted was she to be the mother of her little king! Oh, if only one good memory would come to cheer her in the lonely gloom!

She would not summon the nurses; what could they do to make her less lonely? Slow tears began to roll down her white cheeks, and the fever-filled brain would reel. Once, so suffering, the queen felt a soft touch upon her hand. It was evening, and the light was dim. The nurses' voices came dully from an adjacent room,—who had stolen into the sick room without permission?

“Mother, they have all gone to look upon the feast. I have been watching, and now I have come to see my little brother!”

The cruel shapes melted at the sound of that tender voice. A soft light broke from the settling logs, and in its gleam shone the face of my little lady.

“Elizabeth!” The queen started. In that moment she forgot past hate and yearned toward the little maid.

“Just naughty Elizabeth!” laughed the child,

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in mischievous glee, but Queen Jane noticed not the tone.

That cool little hand was all that was keeping the dreary shadows away ; she must hold the childish fingers or the gloom would engulf her again.

“Elizabeth,—” the voice was like an echo in the vast room,—“ tell — the — king I want you and Mary— poor Mary—to stay here with— my boy. Do you hear ? ”

“Why, yes, mother; shall I go now ? ” asked Elizabeth, wonderingly.

“No, no, do not go ; by and by will do. I want you to share equally in all except — the crown ! ” The last word came shrilly. “The crown is his. Seek not to wear the crown, little Bess ; too heavily it rests upon a woman’s head. Love— my — baby — be faithful to my little boy ! ”

The gentle fingers of my little lady did not relax their firm hold ; she was too frightened for that. Something awed her, and she even forgot why she had come. But the queen’s voice had attracted the attention of the attendants, and they hurried into the room.

“T is the Lady Elizabeth ! ” whispered one ; “what does your ladyship desire ? ”

“I wish only to see my little brother.” There was a quiver in the brave voice.

Another woman lifted the tiny prince and brought him to the princess’ side. She looked

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long and yearningly upon him, then with sweet gentleness kissed his cheek.

"I will love him always, mother," she whispered ; and Queen Jane smiled in a rapt content.

But ere another day had come and gone, the sound of revelry was hushed, and one cry was voiced through the castle,—

"The queen is dead ! The queen is dead !"

CHAPTER EIGHT

LITTLE JANE GREY

NOW, I wonder," said my little lady, bending her head lower over the bit of needlework in her hands, "what the king, my father, means by sending our tutor, Roger Ascham, away so suddenly. Margaret Bryan knows not, nor sister Mary. I warrant 't is most important, for good Roger forgot to bid even *me* farewell."

The sunlight filtered through the leaves of the tall trees under which Elizabeth and Katharine Howard, the king's new wife, sat, and turned to ruddy gold my little lady's hair.

"The king is sorely tried these times," sighed the sad little girl-queen. "I know him not. I can neither amuse him nor share his troubles." More to herself than to Elizabeth did the queen speak. Her beautiful face was clouded, and the soft eyes were often dim that were bent above the dainty cap she was embroidering.

"Perchance he has too many queens," mused Elizabeth, in childish wonderment.

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“Mary is a Catholic,” my lady replied, clasping her hands around her knees and looking off to where Prince Edward frolicked with his little dog. “Mary works upon altar-cloths all day long, until her eyes are nearly blinded. I wonder that my father permits her to be a Catholic, if he so dislikes them.”

“Not even a king can unmake a Catholic,” almost whispered Katharine.

“My father can do anything!” my lady proudly exclaimed.

Since Jane Seymour’s death both Elizabeth and Mary had shared Court life with Prince Edward. Elizabeth, with her sunny temper and ready wit, delighted the morose king more and more. Then, her devotion to her young brother and his passionate love for her charmed and touched Henry Tudor. Elizabeth’s name was the first which fell from Edward’s lips; then, as if eager to show how precious she was to him, he added “sweetest” to this, and rarely addressed her in any other way. And my little lady, quite forgetting her late queenly ambitions, poured her sweet motherly love upon the small prince. She was jealous only of his affection and trust. Between him and her nothing must come. But with the poor little frightened queen, too anxious about herself to heed any one else, and Mary shut away in her apartments, whom had my lady to fear as a rival

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in Prince Edward's heart? And yet, as she sat beneath the trees, an uncomfortable sense of coming danger hung over her.

A dim memory of something Roger Ascham had said about a new playmate disturbed her. Had he gone to bring an enemy to Court in the form of a playmate?

The Catholic uprising was as nothing compared to her fear of any one sharing Edward. She watched the little prince darting over the lawn with the dog at his heels. How beautiful he was, and all her own! He was the one undivided love of her lonely young life.

"Edward!" she called presently, "come see what sister has made for you!"

The child came running toward her gayly.

"What is it, sweetest Lisbeth?" he questioned, turning his fair, flowerlike face to hers.

"It is a shirt, Edward. I fashioned it myself; you must like it better than all the others."

"Thank you, sweetest Lisbeth!" he lisped, eyeing the garment in perplexity. "What do little boys do with — with such things?"

My lady laughed merrily.

"Nursie will show you by and by. And now, sweetheart, pray come and study your lessons with sister. Roger is gone, but Margaret will hear you recite them later, and I wish you to know every word to surprise her."

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Then, as if even that slight cloud hurt him, the small prince changed his tone.

"Good-bye, sweetest Lisbeth!" he shouted. "I'll be a good boy, and I'll mind all you say when I am king."

That was the extent of their quarrels.

In the library the king awaited his daughter. A look of heavy weariness had grown upon Henry's face.

Many queens and political intrigues had told upon England's monarch. He feared the present, but he feared the future more, and the past was more terrible than both.

The thought of who should reign after him was becoming a daily one to Henry, much as he disliked to own it. He was not as strong as he once was. His heavy body was often a burden. Sometime, perhaps, ere long, he, the consequential Tudor, would be gathered to his fathers, and some one would rule in his stead.

There was Edward, to be sure. The fair, beautiful boy, with his mother's wondrous eyes, was all a fond father could desire. He was quick-witted, and of a joyous temper, but — Henry sighed as he thought — what *did* Edward lack? It was force. Too ready was he to follow another's lead. Did Elizabeth but beckon, Prince Edward ran to do her bidding. Alas for the throne of Tudor if its monarch bent his lordly will to any one! much

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less a woman, even if that woman were a Tudor herself.

Then, Edward was frail, and so many ills beset a young child ; and he, that golden-haired boy, was all, the king felt sure, that stood between the throne and Mary.

What would it profit him to name Elizabeth again ? The Catholics were rising against even him. Again and yet again was he obliged to quell a rebellious outbreak. To think of the fair country falling into the hands of Mary the Bigot, with her “ English head and Spanish heart.” To think of it becoming priest-ridden under the touch of Spain’s hated monarch !

There was love of country mingled with Henry’s selfishness. Born under a luckier star, he might have made a noble monarch.

From such gloomy reflections, Henry turned to Elizabeth. Young as she was, she was wise beyond all children his Majesty had ever known. She could turn his somberest moments to merriment. Was there ever such audacious wit and marvellous oldness of reasoning ? She was a princess indeed. If she had only been a prince ! No need then of worry. My Lady Elizabeth was born to live. Strength of mind and body was written upon form and feature. There was no hesitating, and willingness to be led, about my lady. She would have her way with great and

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small, and woe betide any one who tried to balk her.

The king liked well to talk with his daughter. He distrusted every one; to speak aloud to the little girl was like communing with himself, and far less lonely.

A new thought lately had obtruded itself upon him. Suppose Edward should not live to ascend the throne? Then would great rebellion arise between the Protestants and Catholics; of that Henry felt sure. But suppose both Mary and Elizabeth were cast aside by common consent of both factions, and a third successor chosen, who would it most likely be? Why, Jane Grey, the king's sister's grandchild!

Mary Tudor had been well beloved of Englishmen. Her descendant would doubtless be acceptable to the turbulent people. Well, then the present monarch must see this possible heir, vague as the chance was, and so Roger Ascham had been sent forth to bring her as guest to the Court. It was upon this business that the king desired to speak with his daughter. She was necessary to his plans.

Into the library tripped my lady; all smiles and pretty graces was she. How proud was she to be of importance to the king!

"Sire, I am here!" she courtesied low to her father. No lady of the Court had finer manners.

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“Ho, Bess!” said Henry, smiling into the grave, serious face. “Why, think you, do I summon you here, you, a mere chit of a girl?”

“I know not, father, unless it is to bear you company.”

“Not so, you imp. I have news for you, my Princess of Wales!”

My lady bowed her golden head.

“We have a guest coming to Court!” said his Majesty; “now see if you cannot guess?”

“Another queen, father?” My lady’s tone was full of distress. Henry Tudor flushed and frowned.

“Nay; a young, but very important visitor. Younger by a few years than you, closer to Edward in age. She is wondrous fair to gaze upon, I am told, and, if rumor has not erred, she will put the quick-witted Bess of England to the test where talents are concerned.”

“Roger Ascham says that in all England not a maid lives who knows as much as I. You see, sire, I too am very young.” An expression of haughty disdain touched my little lady’s face.

The king beamed upon her admiringly. When had she ever failed to rouse his interest? Even now, when many cares weighed upon him, his heavy face brightened as he looked down upon the proud golden head.

“Aye, Roger speaks well of you, Bess; he warns

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me that unless I rub up my Latin there is grave fear that you will outshine your king."

"I shall like Latin," sighed Elizabeth. "It teaches one to say such fine things. But who is this guest, your Majesty?"

"Tis little Jane Grey, Bess, a cousin of yours. Roger Ascham has journeyed into Leicestershire to bring the little maid here, and he arrives to-day. I wish to prepare you for their coming, daughter. Make this cousin very welcome, for who knows the future? This small Jane Grey may be England's queen some day; she must share equally with you and Edward now."

Henry thought seldom of Mary, and never included her in his talk of the prince and my lady.

"Father!" cried Elizabeth, alarmed at the suggestion. Not only was the guest to be a rival in Edward's heart, but she was a rival to the throne. This would never do at all, but what could she do to prevent it? Jealousy struggled in my lady's heart, but, young as she was, her wise wits taught her to hide her feelings; so she smiled her slow, sweet smile.

The king was pleased at her apparent humility. She did not question further, and he thought she would carry out his every desire.

"Now, go, Bess, I want you to tell Edward, as best you can, the position of this little cousin.

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You are all to share alike. Edward will follow your lead." Henry sighed at this thought.

Slowly Elizabeth left the room. Here was a situation indeed,—one requiring all her cunning. Old memories came flooding to the busy brain; memories of the ups and downs at Hunsdon. She loved Court life and the homage paid her as Prince Edward's favorite sister and companion; with this guest, who might some day be the queen (though how this could happen my lady did not see), what changes there might be!

She and Mary might be sent away into oblivion again. The thought was cruel. This Jane Grey might supplant her in Edward's affection, but that was worse than all. She must act, and act at once. This coming Jane Grey must be made to prefer the air of Leicestershire and the society of her own family. The task might be a difficult one: she must obey her father; nevertheless, something, some one, must get this rival from Court.

There was Edward! A gleam of fun sparkled in my lady's eyes. If *she* did wrong and brought the king's displeasure down upon herself, there might be banishment; with Edward, it was different. No matter what *he* did, he would always remain England's prince. Besides, if he made the king angry, and acted in a manner deserving punishment, no harm would really befall him; it was Barnaby Fitz Patrick who would come under

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the rod. There was little in that knowledge to comfort Elizabeth's sense of justice, but the needs of the hour were urgent; every force must be brought to bear, in order that Jane Grey be driven away. So, turning the question over and over in her mind, Elizabeth wandered through halls and corridors, seeking her little brother. She found him at last, standing beside Margaret Bryan in the sunlit nursery.

Lady Bryan was having no easy task, for, in the absence of Roger Ascham, she was endeavoring to teach the young prince what he in no wise cared to know. He was, in truth, extremely young to be brought under the rigor of school-room discipline, but in that distant day, a prince was in training from his babyhood up, and the doubtful return made many a boy beside Edward Tudor rebel against the tyranny of tutor and ruler.

"I will *not* learn the hard words," he was saying, as his sister entered the room; "and I will never, never, never be a king unless I can do just as I choose!" He shook his yellow curls, and turned his great, beautiful eyes from Margaret with quaint defiance.

The good woman sighed, and recalled what a different pupil had been sweet Bess in the old quiet days of Hunsdon. Court life and glory were all well enough in their way, but they were problems. It seemed hardly right, to Margaret's

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honest mind, to appeal to this little child's pride in being a king, in order to arouse a thirst for knowledge in him. But the appeal, when any was necessary, had always worked wonders with my little lady, and in despair Margaret had brought it forth to Prince Edward. But it was lost upon him. However, the lady mistress was no weakling, and she saw in the rebellious boy before her a subject of the king, who must be reduced to proper obedience, be he prince or pauper; so she said calmly: "I will leave you with Elizabeth for half an hour; at the end of that time, unless you will obey, I shall report you to the king!"

She turned and left him. He watched her depart, with a pout upon his pretty lips; then he held out his hands to Elizabeth.

"I want to play," he said; "the lessons tire me."

Poor little prince! His sister looked at him with old, unchildlike gaze, then a great pity for him filled her heart; she ran and took him in her arms and carried him to the deep window-seat. The vast park lay spread before them, a place of delight for playful, childish feet, but before they entered its happy precincts, Elizabeth had work to do, and she set about it in a manner that might well have been copied by Margaret Bryan.

"Edward loves me very, very much, does he not?"

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A pair of small, plump arms about my lady's neck was the only reply.

"Then listen. A little girl is coming to Court to live. She is not much older than you, but she is *very* wise and extremely learned."

Edward looked into his sister's face, full of interest at once.

"We must treat her beautifully, because our father desires it — even if we do — not — like — her!" There was much hidden meaning in the slow, calm voice.

"Is she a bad little girl?" asked Edward, endeavoring to follow the idea in his sister's quicker thought.

"I have never seen her. But — " here Elizabeth paused, to make her point emphatic — "she is going to be queen after our father, if anything happens to you and Mary and me, and I believe she is just coming here to learn — *how* — to — be — a queen!"

"What shall we do to her, sweetest Lisbeth?" Young as he was, Edward had caught the spirit lying under the quiet, even words.

"My father has told *me*," the merest accent was on the pronoun, "that I must make her very welcome. And I always obey — father."

"Our father did not tell *me*," the accent was pronounced enough on Edward's tongue. "And we do not want her here, do we, Lisbeth? The

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days are so happy with just you and me!" Again the close clasp of the baby arms.

Suddenly the nursery door was flung back. Had Margaret so soon returned to her duties? No. Unannounced, but guided to the doorway by unseen hands, a small, weary person entered, and shyly glanced around. Her eyes showed signs of recent tears, and she looked lonely and homesick. "I am Lady Jane Grey!" she said pitifully, as her sweet gaze fell upon Elizabeth and Edward, "and, please, I am your little cousin, whom you are to make welcome!"

In that moment all envy and hatred died in my lady's heart.

CHAPTER NINE

THE WHIPPING BOY

HERE were troubles at Court: troubles for the king, for Prince Edward, for the Lady Elizabeth and Jane Grey; and especially was there trouble for small Barnaby Fitz Patrick, who really had done nothing at all to merit his misfortune. But then, for the matter of that, no one there imagined he *deserved* what ill luck had befallen him.

The king was again queenless; unless poor Anne, in her lonely castle at Richmond, could be called a queen. Foolish, pretty Katharine Howard had passed out of life, with her fair head upon the cruel pillow where her cousin, Anne Boleyn's, had last rested. Whether justly or not accused of the wrong the king brought against her, she had paid the penalty with her girlish life. And Henry Tudor was alone once more upon his throne, and in private thought himself very badly wronged.

Prince Edward, also, was having stormy times. Sweet as he generally was, there were occasions when his noble and energetic tempers were getting beyond the control of nurses and tutors. What

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was to be done? Even Elizabeth failed to bring him to terms at times, and he defied all powers in truly Tudor style. There were exciting hours in school-room and nursery during those periods.

Little Jane Grey, dwelling there among new scenes, often wished herself back at Broadgate, and within the shelter of her quiet home. She had been trained from childhood by an unwise and ambitious father to consider herself a possible queen; but if all this tumult and sadness meant the home life of a monarch, dear little Jane wished that her feet might be turned away from the steps leading to a throne.

There were days, however, when the three children played and romped under the spreading trees and were gloriously happy; but those were the days when kings and queens were forgotten. When Edward asserted his rights, or Elizabeth ruled over them none too gently, the small stranger at Court fell sick with longing for the days when she was plain little Jane Grey.

But all these troubles and perplexities were as nothing compared to the woful condition of Barnaby Fitz Patrick, the Court "whipping boy."

The king might feel himself wronged, but Barnaby *knew* himself to be. Prince Edward might feel his importance, and fume and fret under authority, but he was in his own castle, and among friends.

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Jane Grey might yearn with homesickness until her gentle heart was almost bursting, but it could not compare with the soul hunger of poor Barnaby Fitz Patrick, who was starving day and night for a glimpse of the green Irish hills, where his free feet used to roam in the days that seemed so long ago to his weary, aching heart.

Now, when Barnaby was a very small boy, he had lived with his father in Upper Ossory in Ireland. A right jolly lord was Fitz Patrick, but none too loyal to his Majesty King Henry the Eighth. In fact, so very turbulent was the old Irish gentleman that he stirred up more than one revolt in the beautiful little island, and so the king sent his soldiers there to teach the wilful lord his duties toward his monarch. Fitz Patrick gave the soldiers an exciting time ere he was finally subdued, and even then how could they trust him or feel sure that once their faces were turned toward London he would not be up and about his mad pranks again?

It would have seemed a simple matter to end the career of this Irish lord, but such was not Henry's desire. He thought of a plan that would insure the future good behavior of the lord of Upper Ossory, while yet he was above ground. Little Barnaby, the lord's well-beloved son, was to be brought back to Court as a hostage for his father. Did any trouble arise on Irish soil, and

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it could be traced to Fitz Patrick, then woe to the small prisoner! Could any other plan have so completed the downfall of this proud Irish chief? But alas for little Barnaby! No more were his nimble feet to run over bog and moor. The free air of the hills and lakes was gone forever for him; instead, his days were to be spent at a Court that was indeed a prison for him. The love he won from English hearts that pitied his forlorn state did not comfort the faithful little soul. Only one longing had he, the longing for home. Why he did not die, who can tell? He was not treated cruelly, he was cared for bodily, and, perhaps, because there was work which no one else could do quite as well as he, little Barnaby lived to do it.

He was silent and oftentimes sullen, but he performed his tasks and asked no favors, and while the father in Ireland kept the peace, the son in exile fared not badly. But what should they do with Barnaby? Why, make a whipping boy of him, commanded the king! It was not meet that Prince Edward should feel the touch of the lash, though in perplexity the king saw that he often richly deserved it; some one must take the punishment for the royal boy, and the scapegoat was to be Barnaby Fitz Patrick!

“How is that to cure Edward of his tempers?” Elizabeth asked, when first she heard the news,

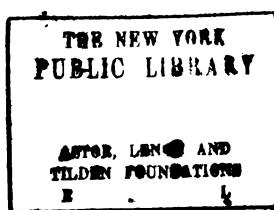
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and her girlish spirit rose at the injustice. Besides, she had a warm admiration for Barnaby, and the thought filled her with bitterness. Gladly would *she* have borne many a whipping if the little brother could have been brought under control thereby, but then she loved Edward, and Barnaby hated every one in England. He had told her so more than once, when she had broken down his stern boyish silence and had won his partial confidence. My little lady had met many a difficulty in her short, troubled life; but this one, coming in the days when she was more nearly a child in feeling than ever before, affected her deeply and lessened her worship for the small princely brother.

How she watched Edward and tried to divert him from open rebellion! She even besought Mary, sitting apart at her everlasting devotions, to pray for Edward. Jane Grey was impressed into the service also; and when Edward refused to learn his lessons, Jane, who was near his age and hence closer to him in study time, was ordered to whisper his answers and to spare him, as far as possible, from the necessity of working when he chose to play. Jane agreed most willingly to do this. She was ready at her books, and even with his faults little Jane had fallen under Edward's charms and was his most devoted slave.

But nothing could save the evil day. From





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Roger Ascham down to the humblest servant, Prince Edward demanded acquiescence to his whims, and they dared not restrain the spoilt boy. So no wonder that he confused their position with his father's, and upon one unlucky morning met his equal in the person of his king.

Henry, in no very humble frame of mind himself, was pacing up and down upon a terrace that overlooked the park, when he beheld a small flying figure making for the rose garden, followed by urgent calls from Lady Bryan and others. It was Prince Edward, and from the very motions of the fleeing child, the king saw defiance and anger in every outline. His Majesty recalled bits of conversation that had drifted to his ears in regard to this same little rebel, and Henry was too truly the ruler not to realize that even the future sovereign must be taught obedience to superior power until he became power itself. Slowly and ponderously he descended the terrace, and walked toward the beautiful garden.

Edward saw his father advancing, and braced himself, mentally and physically, for what awaited him. The little flushed face was lowered, and the tangled curls half hid it. The large eyes, however, were raised, and never shifted from the stern countenance approaching.

When the king came within a few feet of his son, he paused, and asked slowly:

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“Why were you running away?”

“Because I did not want to stay indoors, your Majesty.” The little voice thrilled with defiance.

“Who wished you to remain indoors?”

“Roger Ascham, Lady Margaret, sweetest Lisbeth, and Jane Grey.”

“Why did they wish you to stay?”

“T was lesson-time, sire.”

“And you are running away from a duty? Shame upon you, Prince Edward! Will you bring yourself to scorn because you are not brave enough to do unpleasant things?”

No answer.

“If you are to be a wise king, you must be a learned one, do you know this?”

Still no reply, except a flash of the bright eyes.

“Answer at once, Edward!” The sternness in Henry’s voice was new to the little son, but he quailed not.

“I do not wish to be a king,” he said slowly. “Mary and Lisbeth and Jane may study and be queens, I am going to—do—just what I please, and play all the time!”

The king saw that argument would not avail here, so he ordered sternly, “Go at once to your tutor, Edward, and the next time that you rebel against his authority you shall be flogged.”

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A deeper flush dyed the small drooping face, but the boy made no movement to obey.

For one quivering moment there was silence, while Henry Tudor looked into the unfaltering eyes of his little son ; then he repeated : " Go ! "

" I will not ! " It was will against will ; Tudor against Tudor.

" You shall suffer for this, my Prince Edward ! " murmured the king. Then stooping, he lifted the child in his arms and carried him toward the house. Edward struggled, but his strength was unavailing, and with a broken sob he gave it up.

Through halls and corridors strode the king, up the broad stairway, then up a small winding one until at last a little turret room was reached. There the rebel prince was set down. Without a word, the king turned, drew the door after him, locked it, and left his son to meditate upon his wrong-doing.

Filled with childish rage and helplessness, Edward flung himself upon the floor kicking and sobbing. No one came. Then after a while the tempest passed, and he arose, wiped the tears from his eyes, and took in his surroundings. The room was new to him. It was sparsely furnished, the one small window was above his head, and the door, through which his father had gone, was locked between him and liberty.

This was to be his future home forever and for-

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ever. Even in that desolate moment Edward Tudor made up his mind definitely that he would *never* give in! And in his baby heart something warned him that his king and father would be equally firm.

By mounting upon the wooden chair, Edward could see far down and over the castle park. How fair and sweet it was! Lost to him forever! A deeper sob shook the tiny form.

Directly beneath his prison window was an open space surrounded by tall trees, in which the king's servants often played at quoits while awaiting a summons, or resting from their labors. As he looked, Edward saw little Barnaby Fitz Patrick sitting under one of the trees beyond the open space, his boyish face buried in his hands and his frame shaking with convulsive sobs. It was too far to call, but a new pain filled Edward's heart; *he* as well as Elizabeth liked the little Irish boy, and it saddened him to feel that Barnaby was in trouble. Suddenly the watching Prince saw Elizabeth run hastily across the open, and kneel beside the sobbing boy. Oh, if he could *only* hear what she was saying! But she seemed miles away.

Now, when the king had descended from the turret room, he was in a mighty rage. He called one of his gentlemen, and gave command that Barnaby Fitz Patrick should be flogged within the

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hour, thereby paying the penalty for Edward's transgressions,—that young prince's body being too sacred to feel the lash. The news spread like wild-fire through the castle.

Long had Barnaby been held as the "whipping boy," but never once had he fulfilled his functions. Defiant as he was, he had never merited a flogging on his own account, and Prince Edward had so far escaped putting the disgrace upon him by the shielding of others.

Elizabeth and Jane Grey, huddling together in a dark corridor, heard the awful mandate and quivered in anticipation. Jane began to cry and openly wished that she might go home. But my little lady braced herself for action. Was there time? Who knew as well as she the nooks and crannies of the castle park? If poor Barnaby could only hide! It might be merely postponing the evil hour, but it would give her time to think, and perhaps later on she could direct Barnaby to Ireland and *home*. She would give him all the money she had. She would forage for food in order to send him abroad prepared; but for now, for this terrible hour, the little "whipping boy" must run and hide!

"Cease crying, Jane Grey!" she commanded, "and, mind you, does any one ask where I am, say I will return presently." Jane nodded. Then tripping along the shadowy corridor my little lady

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reached an ivy-covered doorway opening upon a disused flight of stone steps. The trees and shrubbery grew dense around the entrance, and providing no one saw her, Elizabeth knew she could reach Barnaby in time. She had seen him sitting under the tree while she had stood watching her father and Edward in the rose garden. So far, she felt sure, no one had summoned the unconscious little "whipping boy." She had wasted no precious moments. Looking in every direction, Elizabeth drew in her breath and ran like a flash of light across the open space. Her feet made no noise upon the velvety turf, and, besides, poor Barnaby was so lost in his own sorrows that he would not have heeded any slight disturbance. Once again within the shelter of the bushes, Elizabeth slackened her speed and tiptoed toward the boy.

"Father!" he was sobbing in his pretty Irish dialect, "father, I am that sick at heart I long to die." Then he moaned beneath his breath soft Gaelic words, the meaning of which Elizabeth did not know.

To and fro swayed poor Barnaby, sobbing for his father and the fair Emerald Isle.

"Barnaby!" The boy started and wiped his eyes upon his sleeve. "Barnaby!"

"My Lady Elizabeth!" cried the boy, springing to his feet, and bowing his head before the

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little maid. "How can I serve your Grace?" Barnaby said "sarve" with a tremulous catch in his gentle tones.

"Oh, Barnaby! Prince Edward, my little brother, has behaved so badly that his Majesty the King has ordered a flogging!"

"Well, my lady?" Barnaby forgot his position, and for the moment wondered how Prince Edward's misdeeds affected him.

"But, Barnaby — do you not see that you — you are to be whipped for my brother!"

The boy's head was raised at once, and a dangerous flash leaped into his eyes.

"I have done no wrong, my lady!" Just for the instant the injustice of the act wrung the boyish heart.

"No; but the king commands. And, oh, Barnaby! they will send for you soon; you must hide. I know a place where you will be safe for the time; I will bring you food, and later, perhaps, you can steal away and try to reach your home. I will help you, but now you must go as I bid."

The "whipping boy" drew himself up more proudly, and placing his hands on his hips said boldly, "It is my duty, my lady, to obey the king. 'Tis no lord of Ossory that runs from his duty. When they call, they will find Barnaby Fitz Patrick here!"

Ah! Barnaby, Barnaby, had the real Lord of

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Ossory obeyed his king as well as you did, your little feet would not have been languishing on British soil that day!

“Oh, you *shall go!*” cried my little lady, wringing her hands.

“Never, your Grace!”

“What shall I do?”

“Go back, my Lady Elizabeth, and tell Prince Edward I gladly pay the penalty for his wrong-doing.”

Elizabeth looked in wonder at the pale, proud boy. Here was spirit that *she* could understand, but to find it in a “whipping boy!”

However, since she could not move the boy, there was but one other thing for her to do. Back she ran, little caring whether she was seen or not. Through halls and up winding ways she fled, with but one hope in her heart.

If her father had left the key in the door of Edward’s prison room, something might yet be done.

Breathless and quivering with excitement, she reached the turret. The corridor was dim, so with unsteady hands she groped along the wall. Oh, joy! she felt at once the great key protruding; she turned it, using all her force, for the lock was rusty.

Edward had jumped from his chair as he heard the noise, and now stood defiant as ever, expecting to see his father.

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"Sweetest Lisbeth!" he cried, when the door flew open.

"Edward!" she gasped, "they are going to flog Barnaby."

"What has *he* done?" A sympathizing tone stole into the little voice.

"Nothing, dear, nothing at all," my little lady replied, kneeling beside her brother; "they are going to whip him because you were naughty!"

A slow wonder grew in Prince Edward's face. He tried to reason it out, but his baby mind could not untangle the web.

"That will not hurt me," he faltered.

"Hurt you? Oh, fie, little brother; you *should* be hurt for your own wrong. Poor Barnaby should not suffer for you. 'Tis cruel, bitter cruel! Hark!"

Both children turned. From below arose a stir and a murmur of voices.

Elizabeth sprang to the window, and held Edward in her arms.

The open space was empty no longer. Several gentlemen of the household were there, and in the midst stood Barnaby, with a groom beside him, who held a thick, short lash.

Horror kept Elizabeth silent, and wonder awed Prince Edward.

The lash rose in the air and fell upon Barnaby's little shoulders. He shrank, but both chil-

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dren in the tower felt that no cry escaped his close-shut lips.

Again the lash curled about, but before it fell, the truth had dawned upon Edward's senses. The door was open! nothing lay between him and the opportunity to right a cruel wrong.

"Come!" he uttered, and, not waiting for his sister, his eager feet, guided by an instinct that did not err, ran down the stairs and through the palace to the outer court.

How many times the lash had fallen on the "whipping boy's" shoulders while Edward was on his way, no one could tell; but certainly not many. Out into the golden sunlight fled the little prince, Elizabeth close behind. Straight for the group went he; he put out his hands, and the circle of men parted at his puny strength; he rushed to Barnaby, who stood white and rigid; he clasped him with his trembling arms, and uttered: "You shall not whip poor Barnaby Fitz Patrick! 'Tis I, Prince Edward, who has done the wrong! Go tell my father that I will obey; I will be a good boy!"

A silence fell upon the group. The groom who held the whip let it fall clattering upon the ground.

"Bravo! Prince Edward!" It was the glad voice of my little lady. "Bravo!"

None one took up the cry, and it floated on the still air.

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The king heard it as he sat within the castle. He stepped to the casement, and, looking out, beheld the scene. The small prince clinging to the pale, rigid Barnaby ; Elizabeth, her face raised in joyous pride ; the shouting men,—all, all, the king saw, and his heart rose within him, for he understood. Then, he saw Barnaby Fitz Patrick kneel beside the prince, he saw the poor little hostage kiss reverently Edward's hand ; and because Henry Tudor knew men, he realized that in all England his son would never find a warmer friend than little Barnaby Fitz Patrick, the Court “whipping boy.”

CHAPTER TEN

THE MERRY COURT OF THE PRINCESS BESS

THE glinting sunbeams rested warmly upon two young girls seated within a deep window of an old castle.

The castle was my lady's own home. Here, surrounded by her miniature court, she dwelt right joyously.

For chaperone she had Lady Tyrwhit, who had succeeded Margaret Bryan, and later Katharine Ashley. The "Lioness of the Tudors" had not at first welcomed this change, but she had grown to love the grave woman who had her best interests at heart. Then there was Roger Ascham to guard and train the brilliant mind; a cofferer to attend to the expenditures of the household; and, above all, there was sweet Jane Grey often passing her time with my lady, and no brighter comrade dwelt in all England than merry little Jane. Never had Elizabeth been so happy, and yet years had passed; full, troubled years, and they had touched the girlish face, leaving their marks in the depths of the clear, penetrating eyes, and around the firm mouth.

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As she sat in the summer glow, the radiance smoothed away the serious lines, and my lady looked very young and tender.

On her knees she held a large, brass-bound box; the lid was raised, and the treasures within claimed her thought. Pretty Jane Grey waited. Elizabeth had sent for her, but she must bide her time.

"This is my treasure-box, Jane," there was a wistfulness in the deep tones: "I have never opened it in your presence before, nor have I told you my secrets. Jane, do I look like a girl whose heart hides much?"

"I know not, Bess, how such an one should look. I do know that you are wondrous fair, and, oh, so good to me!"

"There, there, little one, 't were an evil one indeed who would harm you. Come hither, Jane; I wish to share the secrets of my heart with you. I know not why, but even in this summer glow and golden splendor a shiver passes over me, and I cannot shake off the fear that a shadow draws near to dear Hatfield, my own little court."

"Speak not so, dear cousin; never were we happier or freer. Even now your gentlemen and ladies await your bidding. 'Do you wish to hunt the hart to-day, my lady?' that is their cry."

"Later I will hunt, but first, Jane, help me lay the past away to rest. I have been putting my treasures in order, and they bring back memories

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that hurt bitterly. I am not always strong or brave, little Jane; I am often lonely. I would have you love me, little one, just for myself, and whenever you think of me in the future, try to remember that I *needed* you. I want those that I love to remember that I, even I, needed them — at times." The last words came slowly, and there were tears in the princess' eyes.

"See, Jane," — Jane Grey had her arms about Elizabeth's neck, and her fair cheek was pressed against her cousin's — "these jewels were my mother's; my father gave them to me, but he spoke no word of her. I thought my heart would break. I longed so to ask him of her looks and ways, but I dared not. Once, long ago, when I was but a wee lassie, there was one at my father's court who found me weeping sorely by myself at night. She told me of my mother, — she was her friend. She wore a ring that my mother gave her, and she spoke tenderly of her to me. Whenever I hear whispers of my dear mother that make my blood run cold, I think of that unknown friend, and the memory helps me even now."

"Who was she, Bess?"

"I know not. She has passed away. I think she had something to fear from my father. She would not speak her name, but she said she was my friend."

"Mistress Ashley was your mother's cousin,

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Bess ; she might have told you much, and yet you never asked her."

" Nay, her lips too were sealed. I fear me, Jane, that my mother was but a sad mother, and yet I love her. For her dear sake I have loved all my father's queens. I have fancied 't was no easy thing to be a wise or good queen in my father's court."

The young girl laughed wearily.

" Catharine Parr was good and wise, Bess ! "

My lady shrugged her shoulders. " Poor Catharine ! " she sighed ; " see, Jane, I have laid her jewels beside my mother's. I think of all England's queens I loved her best, though she did not believe it at the end."

" Oh, Bess, I pray you let me see the jewels, how many and rare they are !" Little Jane almost gasped as the sunlight fell on the glittering mass.

" Catharine gave me half," murmured Elizabeth, " and she sent such a tender message with them. I would she had given me the message herself. I fain would have seen her gentle face, when, forgetting all the troubled past, she bade them tell me to train my mind well, for she believed that I would yet be England's queen."

" England's queen !" My little lady raised her head proudly. " What would I not give, my cousin Jane, to wear my father's crown ? I dream of it

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by day and night. Something in me calls out that I would not unworthily wield the power. I see the errors of my house; I feel that in me many of them would disappear, and the Tudors might regain all that they lost in my poor father." A dry sob choked the eager voice, then the words flowed on : "But it is only a dream, dear Jane ; I must put it aside. There is Edward on the throne. Poor weak little brother ! Far rather would I have him by my side. Does he still love me ? I rarely hear from him, and it troubles me."

"Oh, I am sure, Bess, that he loves you above all the world." Little Jane was holding the jewels in her small white hand, gazing enraptured at their radiance.

"He is so young to be a great king, you know. Only fifteen ! It seems a farce, I vow, to think of merry little Edward bearing the weight of the empire on his boyish shoulders."

"A farce indeed, my lady Jane, but one would think that with all the great lords set over him to give advice and counsel he might steal a moment to write to his 'sweetest Lisbeth.'" The old childish title fell from my lady's lips with a wondrous tenderness.

"*Because* of the many lords, dear Bess, mayhap Edward has not a moment of his own."

"Very like. You have a wise head, my Lady Jane Grey ; the same thought has entered into my

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own poll more than once during the last week. Does my Lord of Northumberland think to outwit Elizabeth Tudor? Did I know he kept me from my brother, I would find a way, my cousin Jane! Little they know me." She laughed merrily, tossing her golden curls.

"Put aside the gems, Jane; what an idle lass you are, to be sure. Within the box there are other things besides jewels, my girl, and I would have you know and think better of my many mothers. 'Tis a blessed thought that in the kingdom to come there is to be no marriage or giving in marriage. The memory of my father's life wearies me even now."

Jane had obediently lain down the jewels, and now held a package of letters in her hand. They were tied with a silken ribbon, and there were tear-marks on them.

"What are these, Bess?"

"They are dear Edward's letters, Jane. Belike they are all that is left of him that is mine alone." Elizabeth took them and held them to her lips. "I cannot share them even with you, Jane, and you loved him well in the old merry days."

"I love him still," murmured Jane, a pretty flush touching her round cheek.

"But not as I do, Lady Jane!" Elizabeth broke in excitedly. "In all the world none loves

CHAPTER THE THREE

my mother as I am. I am sensible now of my past sins, yet where my father's death? — I was born ignorant under his roof. His voice in rebuking offends me now, and to make from me what he was at nine years. He chastised me, and so made me better than him in my birthright. "Do I never tell you?" I often used to say when I was a child, and my mother — "I sometimes fear me of your very earthly things, because you have a better life than we have. I used to be the first that I could rise and wash from sin, but it is now hard; I want my father as I did once — having no beneficary, I see no prospect, and the world over us all seems more than the shadow of the world leaving us, upon any side. It grows and grows until this earth I cannot pass away, and it is not that man's work who just delivered such me! I thank God, he taught him to live mortally after my father. I think my brother's anger rose when he said what was very thoughtful, for he sent me away to Hartfield and his sister, and there I was that bitter day when they brought my brother to me before they told us that our father was no more. Oh, Anna, how I wept, and how he clung, sobbing, to me. They who looked on shed tears at the sight of our grief; but, Jane, —" Elizabeth was smiling merrily, — "it was not grief alone that moved me, though with the thought of death came the memory of the good I had once

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loved,—greater than my grief was the fear that Edward could *not* redeem the wrong-doing. Then I swore within my heart to stay close beside him, and help him while I lived. But—"the brave voice broke—"they have taken him away, and I know not how he fares."

"There, there, sweet Bess!" coaxed little Jane, "we will write to Greenwich, and beg an audience with the king. He favored you once, sweetheart; he will listen yet again."

Elizabeth shook her head. "I went in great state that once, Jane, but I found him changed. If I go again, it will not be as a princess. I must find Edward's heart, and win him back through my love."

"What is this, Bess?" Jane was holding up a dainty cap.

"Sh!" Elizabeth dropped her voice. "'T is all I have that belonged to Katharine Howard."

Jane Grey shuddered, for the memory of King Henry's fifth wife was a chilling one, even to her tender nature.

"I know," whispered my little lady, "I think in all England I am the only one who holds a gentle thought of poor Katharine Howard. I—and perchance a wretched waif who benefited by her generosity."

"Her generosity, Bess?"

"Oh, aye. Like all the world, she was both

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good and bad, and I sought and found the good."

"Tell me, Bess, I fain would know the good, that I too might reverence it in one who was most unhappy."

"True, she was most unhappy, and she was so very young. She was my mother's cousin; that touched my heart from the first. I thought to learn more of her who was taken from me before I could well know my loss. But, Jane, so greatly did poor Katharine fear my father that never a word of my mother passed her lips. And I think, knowing how she feared, it is but folly to suppose the queen did err much. What she was before she came to my father's Court I know not, but I will not believe wrong of her after. Had my father paid more heed to the good she did, and less to the idle tongues which so sadly wronged her, he might not have sent her pretty head to rest upon so hard a pillow."

The two girls were crying softly together. For while the horrors of Henry's Court were rarely discussed, they had sunk the deeper into those girlish hearts.

"Was this poor Katharine's cap, Bess?" asked Jane through her tears; "she was over-young to wear so old a cap."

"Nay, 't was not hers; but she wrought it with

COURT OF THE PRINCESS BESS

her tender hands for the old Countess of Salisbury. You mind how the countess lay in a dungeon cell, by my father's decree? 'T was a cruel thing, and she so old and helpless! Katharine heard the woful tale, and, unknown to all but me within the castle, she gave orders to her tailor to make warm, fur-lined garments for the wretched prisoner, that not too desperately might the sickening cold creep into the old, worn body. 'T was a holy deed, Jane; and if there be a justice beyond our ken, Queen Katharine's act was not o'erlooked when, all too young and friendless, she went before her Judge."

"Oh, Bess, you wring my heart with these sorrowful tales. The sunlight grows dim as I listen. Too late I learn the good in one whom I was taught to hate."

"'T is often so, sweet Jane; better were it if we hated not, for the good is in us all. The little cap," Elizabeth took it reverently, "was intended for the countess as a dainty trifle for a toilet that none but the jailers saw, but ere I had forwarded it on its mission of gentle goodness, Katharine had done the last of her earthly work, and *this* I kept to remember her by; indeed, the countess needed it not. Fold it smoothly, Jane; I seem to see the sewer as she made it, sitting 'neath the trees she loved so well. 'The poor countess must be so wretched, forsaken by all,' Katharine often

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"this be great news. Little Jane summoned instead of me! When such tidings come, I do one of two things, — either I take to my bed with sudden illness or I hunt the hart, to drive dull care away. The day is too fine for a sudden sickness, so the hart must take his chance. Go, man, bid my gentlemen to be ready within the half-hour; the Princess Elizabeth and Lady Grey are not at home!"

"Nay, nay, my lady!" quoth the esquire; "the messenger breaks no delay. The Lady Jane must hasten to London by order of the king."

"Alone?"

"Aye, your Grace, alone."

A shadow fell upon my lady's face. "Then I swear that I will have one happy day. Something tells me that 't will be my last for many a weary space. Make the messengers merry, good friend; I will not see them till I return; so far I defy even my king and brother. This day is mine. Go, Jane, bid you the ladies make ready for the hunt; we will lunch at the lodge within the woods. Go!" My lady stamped her foot. "Who dares deny me here?"

The esquire and Lady Jane fled before that flashing eye. Better brave untried powers at Court than fly into the face of Elizabeth when her wrath was aroused.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ONE HAPPY DAY

TWELVE white palfreys stood by the castle entrance, impatient at delay. Twenty yeomen, brave in livery of green, stood near by. Twelve ladies, all beautiful and young, paced upon the sunlit terrace, awaiting her Grace Elizabeth's pleasure ere they sallied forth to the hunt. Presently she came down the entrance hall with pretty Jane Grey beside her. They were in riding costume, and while Jane looked anxious and flushed, my little lady was all smiles and merry jokes.

What if the Court messengers were chafing in the banqueting hall while they quaffed their cheer? It would teach them that the princess knew no law in her domain but her own; and since the day was hers, not even the noblemen surrounding the king should interfere with it by sending their impudent demands for Jane Grey instead of the Princess Elizabeth. Edward and his advisers must be taught a lasting lesson!

The bugle rang out upon the summer air; my lady and her attendants sprang to horse; the

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bewildered courtiers within the hall gazed unsteadily from the windows upon the merry scene.

The cofferer had not given them her Highness' speech literally : they saw her ladyship wave gayly to them, as she dashed onward toward the cool forest shade ; then they swore deeply and fervently within their beards, for my lady's temper was well known at Court, and the balked messengers feared they had seen the last of her Grace Elizabeth for many a day. And what were they to do ? While they pondered, they drank her wine, and so drinking and pondering, forgot their troubles.

Meanwhile, the cavalcade of gay young people plunged ahead. Only Jane Grey was serious and nervous. What did this summons mean ? What awaited her in that busy, restless London where she so disliked to be ? As she thought, her brow grew troubled, and she sighed softly.

"Prithee, Jane !" laughed Elizabeth, "is it such a dreary thing to go to London town ? My head would be all awhirl, were I so honored. 'Tis jealousy, sweet cousin, that made me treat the nobles so. If they came not for me, then they shall wait for what they did come for. Let the Court business tarry. I am queen of Hatfield !" Again the scornful laugh startled the summer birds ; and if the hart were near, surely

ONE HAPPY DAY

the warning was sufficient to insure him present safety in flight.

"I care not to kill to-day," my lady explained to him who rode nearest her. "Straight to the lodge, my merry men; I have a trick to show you, and then we will eat our meal to the accompaniment of singing birds."

"Do no madcap thing, Bess," cautioned Jane, who well knew the daring quality of her cousin's tricks. "None doubt your courage; I pray you, spare our heart-beats."

"Fear not for me," laughed Elizabeth. "I will not hasten my end, I promise you."

And so on they went under the arching trees, singing snatches of song and cracking a merry jest. The birds caroled overhead, and the summer sunlight made glad my little lady's day.

They came at last to the lodge, hid deep within the bushes. It was Elizabeth's quiet spot, a nook protected by nature, and a sure comfort to her when worldly cares pressed too close upon the young heart left often lonely and neglected. The place was always in readiness for her coming, and they who dwelt within loved devotedly and truly their royal mistress.

The wide doors were flung open from inside as the blare of the trumpets announced the approach. A long, broad hall was to be seen, to reach which one must mount a flight of low, easy steps. The

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merry party swept up to the foot and began to dismount, but not so my lady. She spurned the groom who flew to her horse's head, and, with a nod of defiance to the others, she urged her white horse to step up the stairs. The animal halted, and tossed its mane. Elizabeth gave him a sharp cut. "Would hesitate when I command?" she muttered under her breath.

"My lady!" cried one of the onlookers, "try not to do such a mad caper."

"Bess, what ails you?" said Jane Grey, drawing close. She had not dismounted, and, leaning from her horse, she tried to grasp her cousin's bridle.

"Unhand me, Jane!" my lady whispered, "did any hand but yours try to stay me, I swear I would bare it to the bone! Forward!" she cried to her horse; "I mount the steps to that which is my own!"

Timidly the noble animal set one small foot upon the lowest step, but he paused not again. Guided by that firm, unfaltering hand, he felt his way, little by little, up the flight of stairs, while they who waited below scarcely breathed as they watched. It was accomplished at last, and safely upon the porch stood horse and rider! Then my lady patted her brave companion. "The steps to any throne are perilous," she breathed; "but we have mounted here, you and I!" There was

ONE HAPPY DAY

defiance in her eyes as she turned laughingly to her companions.

"Who follows?" she cried. A cheer rent the air, then a young lad spoke from among the throng: "Who could follow the Princess Elizabeth? We but wait below for her commands."

It was he who, long ago, on that weary ride toward Greenwich, when Edward was to be christened, had sworn to serve her to his life's end.

My lady turned a gleaming face toward him. "My lord," she called, "I bid you come hither and help me dismount."

He kissed her hand as she leaped to the ground, and without a word led the panting horse down the steps.

No shadow marred the golden hours. While they ate and drank, dull care held aloof; but at last the birds made ready for their vesper service. Elizabeth heard and sighed softly; then, turning to Jane Grey, she whispered: "You have hidden your impatience very well, little one; we will ride back to Hatfield now, and you shall — *know*. I wonder, little Jane, what lies before you? 'T is dangerous business, this going up to Court."

Jane shuddered as she listened.

"Now, if it were for me they sent," my lady went on musingly, "God knows my head would ache in anticipation, but you, dear Jane, are another matter. Perchance, 't is only a boyish

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longing on Edward's part to catch a glimpse of a playmate's face. For me, the poor little make-believe king would not dare to ask. I command you, Jane Grey, as you value my love, fill Edward's ears with my longing to see him, and bid him be brave for my sake."

"That will I gladly do, Bess." The soft girlish voice sounded tearful.

"Well, we have had a day, my pretty cousin," Elizabeth laughed gayly, "a day of our very own, while the Court messengers have chased and fumed. I warrant they have drunk deep this day to drown the memory of Elizabeth Tudor. I have ever been a thorn in the side of royalty. Heigho!" with a half-sigh, "now, if we find these merry lords in any degree masters of themselves upon our return, I shall order a repetition of that Christmas revel we so enjoyed a few years ago. 'T is a wise thing, my cousin Jane, to hide your true intentions. Now, while I have defied my king's commands, I mean to make his messengers so well pleased with me that they, not I, will plead my cause before my sovereign."

"Ah, Bess," Jane replied, "have you the heart to repeat that scene? We were but girls then, and times have changed."

"Gad! We are not even yet ancient, cousin," loud laughed my lady. "To be sure, a head or two has dropped since then, but our own are

ONE HAPPY DAY

secure for the moment. Nay, cousin, I will have my way. The costumes are still in keeping. Upon our return fetch them to light, and we will turn the summer eve to one of merriment. "Twould be sheer madness to send these lords back to Court dissatisfied."

"Ah, Bess!" A deeper sigh floated away into the long English twilight. So they rode on, speaking little and thinking much.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE MIDSUMMER BEVEL

WITHIN the gates of Hatfield, the good cofferer stamped to and fro in great agitation. What was he to do? Long and deep had the king's messengers drunk to drown their rage at the audacity of her Grace Elizabeth; and for a time the cofferer had seen them nod and doze, forgetful of her caper; but they were rousing again, and deep maledictions filled the banqueting hall. Still my lady came not, and the twilight was waxing dim.

There was promise of a stormy night at Hatfield; the cofferer grew white at the thought.

A clatter of hoofs startled him. Could it be my lady? Aye, and it was. She was riding ahead now, with her gay followers bringing up the rear. They were singing merrily, as if no such trouble existed as the infuriated courtiers raving like caged lions within the hall. Up to the entrance galloped the party, and a groom, who seemed to spring from the ground, rushed to my lady's horse's head.

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The half-drunk messengers indoors heard the uproar, and came, none too steadily, forth to express their opinion of this day's work.

The clearest-headed one of the company bowed low before Elizabeth, and extended his hand to aid her in dismounting.

“Tilly-vally, my lord !” she laughed. “Without your help, kind sir !” She flung her bridle rein into the hands of the groom, and sprang lightly to the ground.

“I beg a thousand pardons, my friends, for detaining you, — I trust not beyond your pleasure, — but most important business demanded my attention. Then, if I have heard aright, your message is for my cousin here.”

Jane bowed, flushing deeply before the unsteady gaze of the courtier, “And in no wise concerns me.”

The man's eyes flashed angrily : “My lady, a command from Court brooks no delay. The message is most urgent.”

“Hear you, Jane ? Now explain, girl, *why* you followed me, when a Court messenger would stay your actions.”

No one but Jane saw the merry twinkle in my lady's eye.

“I — I received no message, my lord,” murmured Jane, sorely perplexed as to how she should answer.

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"Then how was she to obey, my lord?" Elizabeth turned upon the courtier haughtily.

"I gave the word to your cofferer, my lady; the responsibility lies with him. 'T is a serious business, I fear me. The Lady Jane Grey is summoned to Court, your Grace, upon secret business, by command of her father. She is to start at once."

"Nay, nay, my lord, but to-morrow at day-break, if needs must. During my busy day I have planned an evening for your entertainment. 'T would ill bespeak the hospitality of Hatfield, did I turn you from my doors without a joyous hour,—after your patient waiting."

A smile ran around the group, even the befuddled courtiers forgot their anger, as they looked into the merry, girlish face.

"Go you!" she turned to Lady Jane and the cofferer, "with all haste make ready a feast in the banqueting hall, and prepare the costumes for this evening's bout. 'T is a poor house indeed that cannot make welcome the king's trusted friends."

Where had the gloom gone? All was now excitement and merriment. Indeed, the courtiers felt uneasy as to the outcome of this confusing delay; but they could not ride at night with the young Lady Grey, and if the cofferer had muddled their message, 't was no fault of theirs; and her

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Grace was doing all a loyal subject could to allay their anxiety. So they buried their nervous fears, and gave themselves up to the hour.

Mistress Tyrwhit and Roger Ascham were much distressed at my lady's behavior. It was no light matter to their experienced minds, this trifling with Court business, but what could even they do before that sturdy will which defied every one, when it would have its way?

“What would you?” she laughed at their demurs,—“have me a puppet in my own house? Let those nearest the throne coach their minions better. Let them make a confidant of me as to their secret business ere they demand the immediate upsetting of my plans!”

“Be cautious, my lady,” sighed Mistress Tyrwhit; “when you are as old as I you will bow meekly before the higher powers.”

“I? Never!” cried my lady, “there is always a way out, good friend, if only one is watchful and quick. Now it much disturbs me, I confess, this sudden summons for Jane, but I will find out more by hiding my anxiety; and it is part of my plan to make merry these Court messengers.”

So, in due time, the banqueting hall was thrown open, and the hastily arranged meal announced to the eager throng, who by this time was hilarious enough to satisfy the young mistress' ambition.

It was in keeping with her Grace Elizabeth's

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ideas of splendor that a fine repast should be served at an hour's notice ; so it was to no mean supper my lady's guests now sat down. Loud were the jests and joyous the laughter that spread round the merry board. The candles flamed, the wine ran freely ; and the courtiers, who had spent their day over many a bottle of her ladyship's wine, made excellent display of their practice, and led the others in their toasts to the king, and indeed to all royalty, but mostly, be it said, to their young hostess, who sat at the head of the table drinking little, but by her merry wit leading the others on to excess. Very beautiful she looked in her radiant, scornful girlhood ; and fair Jane Grey beside her paled as she thought seriously upon all that this might mean.

"Smile," whispered Elizabeth at last, as she turned from the lord upon her right hand to her quiet little cousin. "T is no time for long faces, my girl. Something is afoot, of that I catch the meaning ; before the night is over I trust that I shall know more."

Jane smiled feebly ; to her honest young mind the time, with all its significant secrecy, seemed little fitted for mirth.

"The costumes are ready, Bess," she said softly ; "but I wish you had planned a milder entertainment than this revel of misrule."

"T is the very thing to loose their tongues,

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my Lady Jane. I warrant such gay sports are rare enough at Court. Once let a man think his disguise is sure, and you get a glimpse of his heart. Methinks poor human nature likes to be honest when it dares."

Again Jane sighed. It was ever a problem to her, young as she was, that Elizabeth could so lightly turn from gloomy memories and present dangers to gayest mirth. Before she could make reply, however, a gorgeously dressed page entered the hall and went up to his mistress.

"Your Highness," the little lad bent double, "everything is arranged as your Grace desired."

My lady touched caressingly the boy's curls. She was ever wondrously tender toward all children.

"List you, little Launcelot, this be for your ear alone!" She pressed her smiling lips to the child's sunny curls. "There is to be great sport within the hour; to repay you for all your sweet courtesy, I bid you go don a suit the lady mistress will provide, and be in waiting for me at the oriel window of the great stairway as the clock strikes twelve!"

The page flushed with pleasure, and turned away. Then my lady spoke to her guests:

"I pray you, gentlemen and ladies, hearken to me. A few years ago we held such a revel here at Christmastide that all the kingdom did laugh

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but at the telling of it afterward. We may not have the Yule-log, nor the Christmas pie, for the year be too young for that, but the costumes worn at that revel are at your service, and within the hour, if it please your Highnesses, all in disguise we will meet again and make merry. As at the other revel, ‘I give my feodary leave to be Lord of Misrule this night at the manor-house of Hatfield. He is to have command of all and every persons and person; at the sound of his trumpet you are to gather and give him service. His lordship may break bolts and bars, if it please his fancy, and woe to any who disobey him! God save the King!’”

A long, unsteady cheer followed my lady’s cry, and the glasses were raised in unison.

Every Mitchell, the feodary,—a gentleman in charge of Elizabeth to a certain extent, she being what is known as a “ward of the government,”—started in amaze as he listened to my lady’s words.

“Your Grace!” he cried, “I beg you to appoint another. Tis not fitting that I, who presided before, should be so honored again!”

“Lie, my lord! Your modesty ill befits you.” Then she lowered her voice, for the feodary had come to her side: “Who so well knows how to watch and listen as your lordship?

“Gentlemen!” she turned to the others, “no

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locks or bars hide your secrets at Hatfield ; 't is an innocent and jovial place. I pray you, unburden your august minds of all Court business, and make merry for the time. At the trumpet's blast we will meet in the entrance hall."

Chairs were upset in the general rush for the doors. Glasses of wine were tipped over upon the rich damask cloth, and in a few moments the hall was left to the servants whose duty it was to prepare it for another feast later on.

"I wonder that her Grace dare repeat the farce," whispered one man to another as they hustled about. "Do you recall the uproar that followed at the other bout, when it was breathed around that my Lord Seymour, a guest in the house, was in a conspiracy, and our mistress, too, was suspected ? "

"That I do !" answered the other. "I was standing near when her little ladyship demanded that all should unmask at once. No coward was her Grace, even then, and she was but a girl. Lord Seymour paid his debt for the part he bore in the intrigue ; my lady was a veritable prisoner in her own home, but they could prove naught against her. God save her Grace ! but the young have short memories, Jacques." The old servitor shook his head.

"Nay, Thomas, I think our lady at least has a long memory and a deep heart. She has a

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reason for all this, I swear. Hark!" The two ran to the doorway.

A blast of the trumpet in the entrance hall startled them, and they ran to a place from which they could see the merrymakers.

Down the stairs trooped the motley throng, an unsteady but jovial procession.

Avery Mitchell's disguise hid his stern, sad face, and he led, none too gayly, the bedecked train. His mask consisted of a sweeping mustache of hideous color and a great beak-like nose. From the bulging holes his eyes glared out uneasily. He bore in his hand a staff with a fool's head atop of it, from which dangled many bells.

After my lord came the half-drunken revellers,—giants, goblins, Turks, and other heathen representatives; shouting and singing, they reeled along.

"I bid you be just wise enough to make fools of yourselves," shouted the Lord of Misrule; and he sighed, remembering other and more tragic days.

It had pleased her ladyship to wear no disguise, and Jane Grey had been permitted likewise to don no foolish garb. Alone, among the rabble, the two girls passed, calm and with dignified bearing.

"I like it not!" half moaned Jane. "You seem mad, dear Bess. An awful foreboding of



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THE MIDSUMMER REVEL

trouble possesses me. I wish that it were over, and, indeed, that my visit and its cause were past. Bess, now that my father has sent for me, with your permission I will not return to Hatfield after my visit to London is over, but will go to Broadgate. "T is long since I have seen home; my heart yearns for it. Methinks I am unfitted for Court life, even this life of yours, dear Bess. You would not doubt my love were I to go home?"

Elizabeth turned toward her cousin sharply. "Return to Broadgate? Are you mad, Jane Grey? Whom have I but you left; would you, even you, desert me? Not even Mary sends me a friendly word, and Edward has forgotten me. Nay, nay, little Jane, I cannot let you go."

Then my lady turned to her virginal, and her white fingers ran nervously up and down the keys.

The wild games paused for a moment, as Elizabeth's voice rang clear and loud above the tumult. She sang an old English roundelay, a song of summer and the quiet stars. The breath of the warm night stole into the hall, and by its pure touch shamed all the sham and folly.

"Have I your Grace's permission to order the unmasking?" It was Mitchell's voice in her ear.

"What time is it, my lord?"

"Hard upon midnight, my lady."

"Then let them dance and shout for a time

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longer. I have an appointment, my lord, at twelve."

"I warn your ladyship to be cautious," quivered Mitchell from the depths of his hideous mustache: "I fear me there is conspiracy abroad. I beseech your Grace to think of others, and give your confidence to none."

"He whom I go to meet is as true as the stars which shine above our folly!" smiled my lady. "Good Mitchell, my lesson of the former revel sank deep. Go, Jane," turning to her cousin, "go take your pure face into the ghastly crowd; save them by your presence. This may be my last command to you for many a day, my Lady Jane. Go; be merry; let them miss me not." Jane gave a frightened glance, and turned to obey.

"And now," breathed my lady, "for my appointment at the oriel window; will my knight be in waiting?"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A KNIGHT OF OLD

THE moonlight streamed through the oriel window, making queer shadows upon the dark landing of the broad stairs.

It was very lonely and very quiet, for the revellers, led by Jane Grey, had passed out of the house and were dancing under the trees in the park.

Surely no safer place for my lady's appointment could have been chosen. The broad, velvet-covered window-seat looked inviting enough for a resting-place and an undisturbed chat, and my Lady Elizabeth's knight was in waiting. He stood with his face upturned to the moonlight, listening.

Had she forgotten, and gone with the others to the park?

The great bell was tolling twelve; the knight counted the strokes by tapping on the floor with his sword. No; he would not doubt his dear lady, and he had such a bit of news for her.

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His soft golden curls fell richly upon the broad lace collar of his velvet jerkin. He stooped to pull up the tops of his slouch boots, made of Cordova leather; they were very handsome, but rather large for his legs, and the silken trunks wrinkled upon the slim limbs in a most laughable manner. The sword, much too long, was the only part of the knight's costume that gave entire satisfaction. It was the first sword he had ever had buckled to him, and it made him forget how utterly sleepy and lonely he was.

The echo of the last stroke of the bell died away. The knight sighed softly, and climbed upon the window-seat to rest. His sword made the mounting very awkward, but what matter? Curling up as best he could upon the velvet cushion, the knight began to think of the news which one of the masqueraders had just an hour ago told him. He had not been able to distinguish who the man was, but he was a messenger to the Lady Elizabeth, and the man would come again.

While he had been waiting, he had heard a step. Too heavy was it for his dear lady, but it might be one who came from her, so very loyally he had demanded :

“ Who comes here ? ”

“ By my troth ! ” the stranger had cried, laughing deep in his beard, which was very false and

A KNIGHT OF OLD

very black. "So dark is it that I see not the gallant who questions me."

"I am Launcelot Duval," the knight cried, "and I am here, sir."

Just then the moon came from behind a cloud, and, shining forth, showed Launcelot in all his splendor of velvet and lace, to the tall person disguised as a Viking.

"As Heaven hears me, 't is a gallant knight in very truth who demands my name. Well, then, I am Olaf, one greatly feared in days gone by. You had best quail, Sir Launcelot."

"I fear you not, sir."

"Why stay you here, gentle knight, when all her ladyship's subjects make merry below?"

"She bade me meet her, sir, upon the stroke of twelve."

"T is scarce eleven now, Sir Launcelot."

"I can wait."

"Gad! T is a true knight indeed. I wish that I were as fortunate as you, Launcelot; I have a word for my lady, but I cannot catch her ear. She would not listen, perchance, if I spoke; and were I discovered by others within her walls, I should be no longer free to go hence."

"My lady listens to all, sir; she is wondrous kind."

"To such as you, I doubt not; I am another matter, my true knight."

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“Then I pray you, sir, tell me the message ; I will deliver it to her ladyship. I swear it upon my sword.” The young gallant laid his hand reverently upon the jewelled hilt of his newly acquired treasure.

“When you are as old as I, Launcelot the Faithful, you will not so readily trust a secret to another ;” then he paused and thought. “Too great a risk I run if I seek her ladyship among the others ; but if she comes here by appointment, ‘t is for some good cause, I wot, and if I chance upon her I may have my word, and run my head into no great danger ;” so aloud he said : “This far will I trust you, oh, gallant Launcelot. Tell your lady that I have a message for her ear alone. ‘T is a great matter, and if you love her, I bid you detain her until I come.”

“I will, my lord.”

“And whisper what I have told you to no other.”

“I swear, my lord.”

“Then until the stroke of midnight has sounded and passed, adieu.”

As Launcelot remembered the stranger’s words, he smiled, then grew serious as the minutes passed, and neither his lady nor the messenger came.

The half-hour struck. My lady had been detained, and her knight lay sleeping upon the velvet cushions, his dimpled hand grasping the precious sword.

A KNIGHT OF OLD

So Elizabeth found him, and, kneeling beside him, she kissed the lips which smiled in slumber.

All the arrogance and scorn had disappeared from my lady's face.

"Little faithful heart!" she murmured, "where in all the kingdom could I find your equal?"

Was that a tear that fell upon the hand which held the sword?

The sleeper awoke with a start; as he realized what was taking place, he sprang to the floor crying: "My lady! Pardon me, I do not know how it happened, but 't was only for a moment that I slept."

Launcelot was but ten years old, and his ideas of courtesy were rigid.

"Pardon, little one? Aye, I pardon all your past and future errors if they be no greater than this. How have you fared, sweetheart, while I, most unwillingly, tarried?"

"Oh, my lady, I have news for you. While I waited, one of the maskers came and told me that he had a word for your ear alone, and that you must bide until he came."

"And he has not come again?"

"No, your Grace,"—then, with a start,—
"unless he came while I slept!"

"If he bears news he will come yet again. Fret not, little one. Too long have I kept you from your bed; your eyes shine too brightly. List you,

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Launcelot, to-morrow the Lady Jane Grey journeys to London town with the king's messengers ; if possible, I shall arrange to have you accompany my cousin as her own little page. I bid you serve her, my true knight, as you would serve me were I in her place ! ”

“ I swear, your Grace ! ” Launcelot swore often and deeply ; the sword inspired the oath.

“ And while in London, there is much for you to see and hear. I pray you, Launcelot, try to answer my riddle : two eyes have you, and two ears, but only one mouth ; and now, what think you, little lad, that the good God meant by so forming you ? ”

The boy's eyes twinkled.

“ T would seem, my lady, that one should see and hear double what one repeats.”

Elizabeth stifled her laugh upon the little velvet-covered shoulder.

“ Wise are you, my gentle knight ! A lad after my own heart. No safer friend could the Lady Jane have than you. And you ride well, my boy ? ”

“ Aye, your ladyship ; and the horse your Grace gave me is small but swift as the wind.”

“ The distance is not far from London town to Hatfield,” Elizabeth mused ; “ I bid you then ride on the wings of the wind, if need arise ; may I trust you ? ”

A KNIGHT OF OLD

Launcelot bent and kissed his lady's hand.
“Your Grace makes me happy even by sending
me away. I will prove my love.”

Elizabeth drew the child to her and kissed his flushing cheek.

“Now go,” she smiled, “and sleep a space.
They start early, and I must arrange for your going.”

“But the messenger, my lady?”

“I will bide until he come, if I can, Launcelot;
you have done your part. Farewell.”

Hardly had the small feet borne the knight of the long sword away from sight, when Elizabeth heard other footsteps; slower steps were these, and more cautious. My lady turned and gazed upward, for the oncomer was approaching from above; perhaps he had been in hiding in the gallery, watching and waiting his chance.

As he came near, Elizabeth spoke haughtily: “My lord! I cannot further name you, as your disguise is perfect.”

The Viking bowed low.

“T is meet, when one comes upon a hazardous errand, that his disguise should be complete.”

“And is your errand such an one, my lord?”

“It is, your Grace: were I discovered in the giving of it, I would have little need for any guise, save that of winding-sheet.”

“You are grewsome, my lord, and are wasting

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time ; the revellers may miss me at any moment, and your chance for telling your great news will be gone."

The Viking came close to my lady, gave a hurried glance around, then whispered : "The king is ill, ill perhaps unto death ! "

"My lord !" Elizabeth reeled against the window seat, but the messenger evidently knew the quality of the Tudor stock, for, unheeding the muttered cry, he went rapidly on : "His ears are filled with tales against your Highness and the Princess Mary. Sign no papers. Watch, for there is conspiracy abroad ! "

"Go on !" moaned my lady, now standing straight and firm, "from whom am I to expect treachery ? "

"From those nearest the king, your Grace."

"What can I do ?" No words can portray the loneliness and anguish of that helpless cry.

"Try to reach the king in time ! "

He was gone, the disguised messenger, gone in safety, while Elizabeth Tudor stood lost in sorrow and fear.

"Reach the king in time !" she sobbed.
"How can I ?"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE KING UPON HIS THRONE

IT is over! Barnaby, set the casement wide; I wish to look at the swaying trees. Was ever a summer day so fair?"

The young man, moving about the room, stepped to the window and flung open the sashes. He kept his face turned away from the speaker, for there were tears in his eyes; tears which no one must see, above all, the King of England!

For it was Edward Tudor who had so plaintively spoken. While he was supposed, by most of his subjects, to be ruling right merrily, under the protection of the many wise men set over him, in reality his throne was the great carved bed, from which he issued his feeble commands, and was obeyed, absolutely, by none but Barnaby Fitz Patrick, once the court "whipping boy;" now the devoted attendant of Edward VI.

There had been a great scene in the king's chamber that morning, and it had wearied his Majesty, and sore perplexed good Barnaby, who wished to think his monarch could do no wrong,

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stood for centuries in the castle park, and under which he had so often played before he was a king. There had been few play hours for Edward Tudor since then.

"Aye, your Highness, there are many of us who are taught the way, but how few who achieve noble ends!"

Edward stretched forth a thin hand to grasp Barnaby's. "Faithful Barnaby!" he smiled. Then, "Do you ever long for Ireland now, as you did in those days?"

"Nay, your Highness, my heart found a resting-place in England upon the day when my future king took me in his arms. When I went home, by the king, your father's leave, I found all changed,—my parents dead, the lakes and hills hidden behind a mist my eyes had not known before, and, your Majesty, there was but one thing left for me to desire,—to return to England, and to serve to my life's end—my prince!"

The boy was kneeling by the bedside now, his hand buried over the hand of his beloved monarch. For a moment there was silence, then:

"Barnaby, I am weary of all this statecraft and worry. I have done what my Lord of Northumberland desired; now, when I get well,"—oh, the pathos of the weak voice,—“I mean to travel, and you shall accompany me. I will go to—Elizabeth—I shall see her, no matter what all

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the lords of the empire say ! And after that, you and I, Barnaby, shall go to Ireland ; mayhap the strange mists may have lifted by now."

" Too kind are you, my king."

" Nay, not half kind enough. But I am young ; I mean to be a great king. Barnaby, I want to know my people, and have them care for me. There is time, Barnaby. Oh, I am glad to look forward to being a king for many years. "T would be sad to go and leave all this." He waved his thin hand over the castle park, but his boyish, yearning eyes took in all England.

A muffled confusion at the entrance caused both the king and Barnaby to start.

" I tell you, dame, that no one passes the king's door, by order of the Earl of Northumberland."

" But I was his nurse, sir, and, being old, I yearn to see my lad, who is now a king."

" Begone !" in low, angered tone said the young officer of the household.

" How you got here, I know not ; some one shall suffer for permitting it, but I order you off now, or I shall have you bound and taken by force."

" But they tell me he is ill, sir," there was no fear in the cracked, querulous voice ; " and I long to see my laddie, who is now a king."

" T is a lie ; the king is not ill. He is wearied, and is resting. Begone ! "

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“Barnaby, open the door!” Edward raised himself on his pillows, and with flashing eyes watched Barnaby, who sprang to do his bidding.

“There is one greater than Northumberland.” The king’s voice shook with rage and pride. “Who dares to say who shall enter my chamber, or who shall not? Dame, enter, by order of the king! Close the door, fellow!” this to the astonished officer, who stood quaking in the doorway. “When you are needed, I will summon you. Barnaby, bar the door!”

The bent old figure entered, and with head hidden in her deep hood the ancient dame stood in the centre of the sunlit room.

“You say you were my nurse. I do not recall your voice, dame; but if you loved and cared for me when I was helpless, you have strong claim upon me now. Come nearer, nurse; pray let me look upon your face. I rarely forget a face I loved.”

Edward spoke gently, and at his request the bent and crooked form ambled to the bedside, and knelt very humbly. Apparently the old woman was overcome with grief at the sight of him who had once been her charge. For a moment she made no attempt to loosen her hood, but sobbed brokenly as she buried her face in her hands. Barnaby, at the bedfoot, waited, and the king flushed uneasily. Then, with fumbling fin-

THE KING UPON HIS THRONE

gers, the old woman untied the strings of the hood ; by one deft movement, she flung the enveloping folds back, and there, with the glory of the summer day about her, knelt — Elizabeth Tudor !

“ My lady ! ” gasped Barnaby, falling back a pace ; “ as God hears me, my Lady Elizabeth ! ”

The king paled, quivered, then flushed. Putting out his hands in a glad, almost childish gesture, he sobbed, while a strange radiance spread from brow to chin, “ Sweetest Elizabeth ! ”

Then there was silence. What the three thought, who can tell ? But in that vibrating stillness, each went back over the broken years, taking up the dropped threads and weaving them together as best they could in that chamber of sickness where lay England’s weak, dying king !

Elizabeth saw that he was dying, and her heart sank with personal grief ; but above that even, she realized that intrigue was afoot : intrigue deep and vile. Why were the people told the king was well, when he lay so ill ? Why had Jane Grey been summoned to London and then hidden behind a silence that she, Elizabeth, had not been able to penetrate ? Why had that mysterious paper been sent for her to sign, with the offer of a fortune, if she would, by signing, relinquish her right as a successor to Edward ?

Ah, how glad she was that she had been warned

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at the revel, and had refused to sign the paper, sent later, saying that her sister Mary must be considered first. Mary would not sign, oh, no, and the responsibility rested with her. But how glad Elizabeth was, that, having taken alarm at all the secret doings, she had dared this disguise, and had found an entrance to her brother, before it was too late. Too late ! Was she in time to put him upon his guard in case the wily protectors tried to urge him to do a wrong ? She must find out. In the mean time that chamber door was barred against any but her. This was her hour, she must use it well.

“Sweetheart ! ” she breathed, putting back the clustering hair from the white brow, and gazing into the eyes more wondrously beautiful now that they were looking into hers — “sweetheart, I thought perchance you needed me.”

“Nay, I *needed* you not, dear Temperance,” — that was another pet name, — “but I hungered for a glimpse of you. This day has made me feel like a child.”

“Tis so I wished to find you, dear love,” whispered Elizabeth ; “when I came before, ‘t was the king I found ; and my brother seemed lost to me.”

“Oh they bother me sorely, Bess,” sighed the boy. “As a child I cared not to be a king, and now that I wear the crown, my opinion is little

THE KING UPON HIS THRONE

changed. What with Northumberland's ambitions and Somerset's demands upon me, I fail to see where the *joy* of being a king holds part. I am sixteen, sweetest Elizabeth; two years more, and I shall be king indeed. Then to the winds with protectors and guardians! I will be King of England alone! Then — with a warm clasp of his sister's hand — “you and little Jane shall come to Court, and we will live the dreams we dreamed when we were children.”

“Have you not seen Jane, brother?” My lady asked, feeling the fear of intrigue again.

“No,” the boy replied. “I have just made her father a duke, by my Lord of Northumberland's desire. I did it more for little Jane than for him. I wish to honor Jane Grey.”

“But, Edward, Jane is in London; she left me some time since. I was led to believe that it was by your command she was brought here. No word have I heard from her, and I am sorely distressed.”

The thin face upon the pillow flushed. “I knew not of this, sweetest Elizabeth; I will call my lords to account. But fear nothing for Jane; while I live she is safe.”

“Yes,” murmured my lady, and then she lowered her head, that she might shut out, for the moment, the sight of that fair, dying face.

“Jane is a very important person, Bess,” the boy went on. “I have had a long consultation

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“What next did his lordship do, brother, after you so deeply hoodwinked him?” Under the light words, my lady’s tone quivered with fright.

“Oh, he sent for three judges to draw up a deed. ’Twas such a farce, Temperance, I barely could hide my mirth.”

“’T was great cause for mirth, sweetheart. Go on! go on!”

“The judges came. Three such sorry fellows you never saw, Bess; they feared to draw up the paper. They said it might mean their death to take part in an attempt to change the law of succession which had been established by Henry VIII.; as if Edward VI. were not more potent than Henry VIII.”

“Oh, sweetheart, speak not so of our father!”

“I only mean, dear Temperance, that while *I reign*, not even the mandate of Henry VIII. stands between me and what I deem my duty.”

A groan was the only answer my lady vouchsafed.

“I begged the Lord of Northumberland to let the deed stand without signatures. ’Twas child’s play at the best; but then my lord waxed angry, and swore that unless the paper was properly executed, he would have the judges put to death for disobedience.”

THE KING UPON HIS THRONE

"T was like my lord so to lose his knightly temper. I trust you showed him, Edward, that you were greater than he?"

"What matters, Temperance? The argument tired me greatly. I did better than to prolong the scene. I signed a second paper, pardoning the three judges in advance, in case trouble should ever arise. That set their fears to rest, proved my power, and put Northumberland into the best of humors."

"My God!" groaned my lady; and she buried her face in her hands, while she rocked to and fro as she knelt.

Edward laughed lightly, so engrossed in his belief in his powers that he heeded not his sister's anguish.

"And then, sweetheart, what then? Oh, tell me that you did not put your name to the other paper?"

"Indeed I did, Temperance. I could sign my name with a light heart, since they so desired it — for do you not see, dearest sister, that I mean to make sweet Jane my queen in any case?"

My lady raised a white, haggard face to her brother's. The young king, worn out by many exertions, was lying back upon his pillows with closed eyes, a smile of gratified content touching his lips.

From his place at the window Barnaby looked

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upon the heavier and wiser, and his honest heart
grew heavy within him.

As Elizabeth searched that fair, boyish face, all
her grief had slipped from her. The look of the
world-worn woman grew and grew. Too well
she realized that in the future she had not to
deal with that dying brother upon his throne-bed,
but with all the keenest brains in his Majesty's
kingdom. What would be the outcome of the
inflammatory plot that day begun in her brother's
chamber, only God knew; her part was to get
away as quickly and quietly as possible, and to
watch from afar the events that certainly would
follow the signing of the deed.

And yet in her going she knew she was see-
ing the last not only of the king, but of the
little brother she adored. Selfish intrigue lost its
power over her, as the mother-love she had ever
borne him sprang to renewed life. What cared
she who wore the crown after him, if only they
would give her permission to hold that dying
hand upon her breast, while he, the great mon-
arch of England, fell into that sleep which knows
no troubled dreams.

The weary eyes opened. "Did I do well,
sweetest Elizabeth?" How faint the tone had
grown!

"When a king does his duty, Edward, he does
nobly."

THE KING UPON HIS THRONE

“And, sweetest Elizabeth, are you proud of me?”

“I love you above all the world, dear Edward.”

“And you will come to me by and by, sister, when all these troubles are at an end, and I come into my own at last?”

“God grant it may be so, dear love; I wish for no happier lot than to be near you, — when — when you come into your own at last.”

“Why do you weep, sweet Temperance?”

“Because I must leave you, dear one. I must don my disguise and leave you, when God knows I would stay near you — until — until you come into your own !”

“It will only be two years at the longest, sweetest Elizabeth, and then Jane, you, and I will reign together, and who shall say us nay?”

“Who indeed?”

A knock at the door startled them. My lady drew on her hood, gave one lingering kiss to the smiling boy, then, bent and evidently sore distressed, the old dame, who an hour ago had entered the king’s chamber to bid him farewell, went out upon Barnaby Fitz Patrick’s arm.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

LAUNCELOT GIVES WARNING

NOW, when little Jane had come up from Hatfield to London town, it was with an anxious and troubled heart. And yet, she reasoned, her father was to meet her, so what had she to fear?

Little Launcelot, who had been permitted to accompany her, was a great comfort. They talked together of my lady, and planned how they would gather all the Court news they could, especially that which pertained to the young king, and by some happy chance get it to the Lady Elizabeth.

“For we must not keep her waiting until our return,” quoth Jane; “we may be detained. Her Grace does greatly fear for her brother’s health; and as soon as we can discover the true state of the king, we must forward the word to her, and so ease her anxiety.”

“Perchance, my Lady Jane,” ventured small Launcelot, “I could steal away. None would miss me. With a fast horse I could set her Grace’s heart at rest, and be back before your ladyship missed me.”

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Jane patted the fair, golden head. "Swift messenger," she laughed, "were you as quick as the lightning-flash, God knows that I would miss you, laddie. Part of the safe, merry life of Hatfield are you, my Launcelot. 'T was proof of her Grace's good heart that she lent me such a blessing. When I return I will give her fresh proof of my love and esteem. She has ever been my truest friend; I would have her know it."

"That too will I tell her, my lady. 'T will be a budget of sweet thoughts that I shall carry to her Grace Elizabeth."

"God grant it!" sighed Jane Grey.

Once within the king's city, pretty little Jane was sore beset with mighty matters.

She found her father all agog at the anticipated honor of being made a duke.

"Upon one thing depends this great honor," explained the father to little Jane,—"you must marry, my dear Jane, and at once!"

"Father!" cried she, "this is very sudden, and why was I not informed? In all such matters I desire to consult my cousin, the Lady Elizabeth."

"Pish!" My lord snapped his aristocratic fingers; "her ladyship is nothing compared to the king. You are a ward of his Majesty, my Lady Grey, and it behooves you to list to Edward Tudor instead of the Lady Elizabeth. Have a care, my child; you and your headstrong cousin

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may be suspected of conspiracy. Her Grace stands none too well at Court, I can assure you."

Jane's face blanched.

"Who is it that you wish me to marry, father?" she questioned.

"Why, who else but my Lord Northumberland's own son, my fair Jane? You were not above a flirtation with this young lord, my daughter, if my memory serves me well."

Jane's white face went red as a rose. "And does the Lord Guilford Dudley wish to marry me?" she faltered. "Tis a year since I have seen him; his fancy—if he had one—" Jane's pretty face quivered—"may have wandered far since then?"

"Nay," laughed the Lord of Dorset. "'Tis his most earnest desire, I promise you. Were you as poor as you may be rich, even so, says my Lord Guilford, he would choose to wed the Lady Jane Grey."

"And the king?" further questioned Jane, "does the king look with favor upon this marriage?"

"The king's favor goes hand in hand with the favor of my Lord of Northumberland," replied the father.

"Then," whispered Jane, "if the young Lord Guilford asks me, father, I will not say him nay. For though it be a shame for me to confess this,

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even to you, as God hears me, — I love my Lord Guilford."

"Good Jane!" cried Lord Dorset; and he felt himself a duke in very truth.

And so, after a brief but joyous courtship, Jane Grey wed the young Lord Guilford Dudley upon the same day that King Edward signed the deed invented by the Lord of Northumberland. While he dreamed his dreams and smiled, his fair cousin became the wife of the man she loved; and the one, she earnestly believed, her cousin and king most truly approved.

But with the confusion attending these stirring events, little Launcelot tarried in London.

"Wait until I leave for my own home," whispered Jane Grey, "then hasten to her Grace. Tell her I deplored the necessity of keeping my marriage a secret from her, but that I was constrained so to do by Court reasons. Tell her that the king is not strong, but that he is deeply involved in great matters, and that she need not fear for him."

So Launcelot waited.

After the wedding, Lord Guilford and his fair, sweet Jane went to Zion House, and lived for a little time such a joyous life as God sometimes grants when He means to make the space brief. All the rich pleasures that often fill a long life were crowded into their summer day.

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Then Edward died. Sinking into a smiling sleep, he let the fretful worries of an earthly kingdom slip from his boyish heart ere yet he was in reality crowned the king.

The tangled web that he had woven with his feeble hand was left for others to unsnarl. With a childish enjoyment of his power, he closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Poor little king, who yet was not a king ! A plaything in the hands of those who should have shielded him from his own weakness !

Well might he have asked of fate as he long ago asked of his sweetest Elizabeth : “ Do kings have to do disagreeable things ? Then what is the good of being a king ? ”

Now it pleased my Lord of Northumberland to keep the King’s death quiet for a few days. He had tried to get the Princesses Mary and Elizabeth up to London upon some special plea, but had been unsuccessful, and until he felt that his daughter-in-law, the Lady Guilford Dudley, was well established upon the throne that his wily plans had secured for her, it was better that the two sisters of the dead king were in ignorance — since they were not in the Tower — of the mournful event.

So the smiling king slept on, and secrecy stood guard at his chamber door. Then my Lord of Northumberland went down to Zion House, and

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broke in upon sweet Lady Dudley's happy day with the news that Edward was no more, and that she now reigned in his stead.

A great lord was Northumberland, and of mighty power, but with that sweet young wife it seemed for a time that this greatness would not avail.

First she wept in true sorrow for the cousin she had loved. Remembering the days when they were children together, she forgot the troubled after-time, and sobbed bitterly for the playfellow of her early youth.

She could not comprehend the intrigue of which she had been made the puppet, and, when Northumberland tried to *make* her understand that which she had not known before, her indignation dried her girlish tears.

“Nay!” she said scornfully, “I will not take what is not my own. They who loved and trusted me shall not find me an ingrate. Dearly as I loved my husband,”—and right tenderly she put her hand out to him,—“I would not have been his wife, had I dreamed I was being used for so vile a cause.”

Northumberland’s face grew scarlet. If people held an unfavorable opinion of him it was a well-understood rule of the kingdom that such opinions must be hidden from sight.

Was the great lord to be thwarted by this pale, slim girl?

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"I do not wish to be a queen!" she was saying, "I am happier than any queen upon earth. 'T is no great thing to rule a kingdom; I wish to rule but in one heart." She turned a sweet, tearful face to her silent lover.

"Speak to her, Guilford," plead my lord at last. "Too young is she to understand the business of state; tell her why Edward desired her to rule after him."

"I cannot, father," Lord Guilford bowed his bony head. Before the fair innocence of his bride, he dared not tell even the half-truth that was possible.

"The crown," said Lord Northumberland, who was not staggered by a half-truth,—indeed, it was much better material than was usually at his command,—"the crown, if you do not accept it, will go, not to the Princess Elizabeth, whom all good Protestants revere,"—my lord had fallen now from even the half-truth, when he, a Protestant, spoke thus of Elizabeth,—"but to the Princess Mary. Her religion would soon blot out all the good the Reformation has done. Think, my daughter,"—for the good Protestant lord saw a glance of interest flash from Lady Jane's eyes,—"think of all the precious blood shed in the bygone days for the freedom of England's faith. Edward Tudor saw the danger, as did his father before him; and he thought in you, his

LAUNCELOT GIVES WARNING

dear and trusted cousin, he could place the hope of the people."

Lady Jane ceased sobbing. An expression of patient nobility lit her eyes. "Am I the only hope?" she murmured.

"Aye, my lady, absolutely. Dearly as we should love to see Henry Tudor's younger daughter upon her father's throne,"—(oh, my lord, how could you so speak with those searching eyes upon you?),—"it cannot be; either you or Mary, Katherine of Arragon's child, must rule England. From your earliest childhood the possibility of your being England's queen has held part in the business of the empire. 'T is no new thing. 'T is a great and sacred duty, and you would be less a Tudor than any other gone before you, did you shirk so great a responsibility."

"But I would not wound my cousin Mary; she has ever been a good cousin to me," pleaded Jane, her tears again falling.

"'T is no time for personal reasons. Mary is half Spanish; the religion of her mother's country, and the touch of her mother's kindred, would soon be felt in England, did Mary reign. You alone can save your land from bigotry and foreign domination."

So argued my lord; and pretty Lady Dudley, torn by grief, unwillingness, and a desire to do her duty, albeit it was the greatest sacrifice,

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finally gave in to the stronger wills, and, sobbing and fainting, she fell at their feet in an agony of weakness.

A few days later, pale and silent, and surrounded by the men who were using her as their innocent tool for ignoble ends, little Queen Jane rode up to London to be crowned. But while Northumberland was conducting the business with all secrecy and rapidity, Lord Arundel, perhaps the only stanch friend of the sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, had found a way to warn them.

All on a summer's day, a little page, in the finery of the court, was speeding away under the arching trees of the broad highways to bear the word to my lady that the king, her brother, lay dead at Greenwich, though the kingdom knew it not.

It was little Launcelot, my Lady Elizabeth's page and trusted knight since the revel of Misrule.

Very full of news was this young person, and in a mighty hurry to reach Hatfield and put his mistress upon her guard. For had he not been told to warn my lady that under no circumstances must she come up to London now?

The way from Greenwich to Hatfield was not long, and it was safe enough for so good and sure a rider as Launcelot. Indeed, in that hour of such vital happenings, who would spend his time

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watching a little boy evidently bent upon his own pleasure that pleasant summer morn?

But the page grew weary at last, and, seeing a brook by the roadside, dismounted, and, while his horse drank, rested, leaning his fair, golden head against a tree-trunk.

The birds sang, and the leaves rustled above the tired boy. For a moment he forgot his errand, and then,—

“As God hears me, Mary, ‘tis my own page, little Launcelot! Travel-stained is he, poor little lad! I warrant he bears a message. Launcelot! Launcelot, I say, awake, and tell me how you came here.”

The boy sprang to his feet. For a moment bewilderment held him captive; then he made a sweeping courtesy to the two ladies who stood before him, the bridles of their horses thrown over their arms. At a short distance were grooms and gentlemen in waiting.

“Your Grace!” cried Launcelot, flushed with chagrin, “how can I hope for pardon? I slept but for a moment. I have travelled since before break of day. Pray look at my horse, your Highness; he shows weariness even more than I.”

The horse near by, nibbling the fragrant grass, did not appear much overdone, and my lady smiled at her companion.

“Bid the boy tell his news,” said Mary, impa-

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tiently ; “if he has been sent upon an errand, he should be taught a lesson for sleeping by the way.”

Launcelot looked into the plain, worried face of the speaker, and wondered at the difference between the sisters. He had heard of the praying Princess Mary, but surely this sour, ill-tempered woman could not be so godly, after all.

“Come here and be taught your lesson, Launcelot,” my lady laughed softly. The little page knelt at her feet upon the mossy grass.

“Do you bear a message, Launcelot?”

“Yes, my lady.”

“To whom?”

“To your Highness.”

“And you slept upon the way? Fie! what sort of knight are you to your lady? Is it good news you bring?”

“Nay, your Grace, or I would not have slumbered.” Launcelot was a born courtier. Even grim Mary smiled over the lowly-bowed head.

“Tis bad news, then, my knight?” Elizabeth’s brow darkened, and Mary bit her lip.

“Aye, your Grace, and my feet halted, for I dread to put a sorrow upon my lady.”

“Speak!” No longer did Elizabeth falter.
“Speak! what has occurred?”

“My lady, the King is dead.”

“Dead!” cried both sisters, “dead? Nay, he is but ill; we are ordered to his side!”

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“The King is dead, your Grace, and I am bidden to warn you against coming to London town.”

Elizabeth and Mary stared at each other blankly.

“What does this betide?” Mary said at last.

“That Jane Grey will be proclaimed queen ere another day break and wane!” My lady’s voice was harsh and bitter.

“Jane Grey!” In her distant home, absorbed in her devotions, Mary had known little of what was passing. Of these latter developments she knew nothing. “How can Jane Grey take precedence of me and you, Elizabeth?” Mary’s eyes blazed.

“By the king’s written desire, Mary.”

“You knew this?”

“Yes, but too late to be of any avail.”

“Then, as God is my witness, the world shall hear of this thing, and if there be justice this side of heaven, Katherine of Arragon’s daughter shall yet claim her own. Hark you, Bess; go back to Hatfield, and bury yourself as well as you can. I shall issue a proclamation to all who can hear above the tumult of this ungodly thing. I am the Queen! I! I! Do you hear? I am the Queen of England! I! I go hence to Framlingham in Suffolk. ‘Tis near the sea, and if these people will not listen and snatch from this usurper what is mine, then, by high Heaven! I will sail into

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my mother's country, and Spain's king will look to my rights at last. I am the queen! the queen!" Mary's voice rose shrilly, and her clenched hands grew rigid.

My lady shrank before this fierce woman. No longer was she the Mary of the past. Her thin, sallow face grew almost handsome with that flame of bursting power spreading over it. Gone was the expression of the humble martyr, and instead was the look of the arrogant, cruel woman that England was so soon to know and fear.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

TWO WARRIOR MAIDS

MOST wisely had Mary Tudor chosen her castle from which to prepare the defence of her claim. Suffolk was a loyal province, and believed, above all things, in the divine rights of its sovereigns. Could the honest folk have had Elizabeth for their monarch, greatly pleased would they have been ; but to their just minds it was not for them to choose. Mary stood in direct line of succession, and they must stand by her standard, and fight her cause. That fair little usurper in London aroused not their wrath, but her backers and up-holders were hated most bitterly ; now that the time had come to fight for their true queen, and at the same time down Northumberland, they were ready and willing to take their arms and do their duty. A few made murmur that they feared for their religious freedom ; but Mary, alive now to every question that in the least affected her future, replied that, Catholic as she was, she in no wise meant to disturb the line of government for which her father and brother had stood. That settled the doubt in the minds of the subjects in Suffolk,

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and they at once began to polish their weapons and draw nigh to Framlingham Castle.

The Earls of Bath and Sussex, having great interests in the neighborhood, put themselves at the head of troops comprised of their tenants and retainers, and hastened to Mary.

No longer did the grim woman sit at her eternal embroidery of altar-cloths and the like. She was busy from sunrise to sunset, and far into the night, preparing letters to the nobility, asserting her rights, and calling upon them to give allegiance to her. But would they? Amid all the sudden shock of surprise and hope, Mary's distrustful nature toward all was keenly alive.

When, during her long, lonely childhood and young womanhood, had any party stood for her, and demanded for her even a show of courtesy and homage? Could she depend upon them now? Would they not, at a beckoning from another hand, turn from her, or upon her, and drive her far from the throne she so longed to ascend? And for what? Did the plain, unlovely woman hope to gain through her queendom what she, as a princess, could not obtain? Would love come to her empty life,—love, or the semblance of it, bought by power? Or was her religion really the passion of her existence? Did she long for strength, in order to set aloft, in the country that had spurned her mother and her, the flaming torch

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of Catholicism, as an offering to the High Priest before whom alone she had bowed submissively for so many yearning years?

Poor unloved, unloving Mary! In that hour of preparation and torture she stood, in her heart, alone, as had ever been her lot; she knew that, even if the country did rise and uphold her rights, it would do so for other reasons than for affection to her. She realized with a growing alarm that with her sister Elizabeth it would have been different. Not only hands but hearts would have striven enthusiastically in her cause. And perchance even now, while she was sending forth her messengers all over the kingdom with her cries for assistance, intrigue, deeper even than Northumberland's, might be at work in favor of Elizabeth; and, even if she dared to venture forth with her troops, might she not be turned back by her sister's supporters? This new dread grew and grew as one long day followed another,—days full of anxiety and labor.

With all her energies directed toward her accession to her father's throne, the half-sick princess yet gave thought to a possible need of flight, and she so arranged it that if necessity arose she might depart by water to Flanders.

And my little lady, what of her?

Keenly alive to the dangers that beset her, she bided at Hatfield, and watched and thought.

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Young as she was, no one better than she knew the perils that lay at hand. With the child-king dead ; with poor little Jane wearing the heavy crown, which only remained upon her head because it was held there by cruel hands and strong, what could she, the much-disliked Princess Elizabeth, expect ? Surely no favor at court, and perhaps — The Tower ! Those grim walls had ever cast a gloom upon her life since the day when they had enveloped her sad young mother.

Sometimes, when cares and fears held sway over her heart, she had in fancy watched the long, creeping shadow draw near and yet nearer. She never spoke of her terrors and apprehensions ; she was too wise to suggest to any mind what most filled her own with alarm. That would be but putting in a possible enemy's hand a weapon to use against her.

But to Elizabeth Tudor the horror of the Tower was the greatest, perhaps the only, horror of her life. To be shut away from freedom, light, and living touch with all she knew and loved, was too terrible to contemplate. When the fear seized her, she went to great excess of merriment in order to drive the cloud away. So far, her power over herself had been strong ; but now, waiting and watching at Hatfield, the grim fear would not be driven back. Through the summer days it crept nearer and colder.

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Did a messenger arrive, then her proud face blanched, and her brave heart stood still.

The Earl of Arundel, who had found means to send Mary and her a warning by little Launcelot, was perhaps her only friend at court, and what was he in strength compared to Northumberland?

Yet, with all this personal fear, my lady was noble enough to reach out her sympathies to others.

Poor Mary, with that strange look of awakening power upon her face, was a constant memory in Elizabeth's mind. Had it been within her power, she would have gone to her sister and stood beside her until the end came. But she dared not venture.

And little Jane? All the past love and comradeship flooded her aching heart, as she thought upon Jane. She recalled the day, not long past, when they had bent together over the treasure box, and she heard her cousin's sweet voice exclaim: "I would not be a queen for all the world, I should die of the weight of the honor."

How far off the "honor" had seemed to them as the birds sang, and the merry court of Hatfield knew no greater labor than to serve her Grace Elizabeth most joyously.

And yet, even as Jane had spoken, the messengers were riding fast to take her to that empty "honor."

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No bitterness toward her cousin was in my lady's heart as she thought upon these things ; only a divine pity for the sweet young bride, who was serving the ambitious ends of others. "And she was happy?" oft questioned Elizabeth of little Launcelot.

"On my faith! your Grace, my Lady Jane was the happiest maiden in all London town. Again and again she bade me tell you that your fears were groundless. All the great lords were kind and considerate to her, and wished only to do well for all."

Elizabeth nodded. "She was indeed happy if she thought that."

"Aye, your Grace, and you should have seen her upon her wedding day! So much marriage at one time, I never saw." Launcelot spoke as one having vast experience. "There were my lady's sister, you know, and Lord Guilford's sister, all married at the same time ; but I swear, your Highness, the glory which shone from Lady Jane's face did seem to make the others look plain in very truth."

"Aye, mayhap it was so," laughed Elizabeth, "but you are a great flatterer, my Launcelot. Now, had I been one of the brides, how then, my knight, would Lady Jane's beauty have affected you?" There was a touch of jealousy in the light words.

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"In sooth, your Grace, had such beauty as yours been there, I would have seen no other. How then could I compare it?"

"Ah, me!" laughed my lady, "we have in Launcelot the Faithful a courtier in very truth. Go!" She motioned the boy away almost fretfully, "I weary of too fulsome praise. My heart is heavy. Go, and stand you by the gates; if any come hither, pray bring the word betimes. I can neither sleep nor eat, so anxious is my life."

Launcelot sped away over the sunlit park. As he went, Elizabeth called after him: "I warn you, lad, sleep not at your post. Sleep seems ever your besetting sin; too often have I found you slumbering." The boy looked back, smiled, and waved his hand reassuringly.

The warm sunlight flooded Hatfield, but even so, as my lady trod the terraces after Launcelot had departed, it was not the glow of the summer day that she felt, but the chill shadow that lay over her heart.

Suddenly she ceased her restless pacing, and, with a quick indrawing of her breath, turned and gazed with wide, opening eyes at the returning figure of her little page.

Over the park his nimble feet flew. His curls waved upon the breeze, and his face was set and fear-filled.

"My lady!" he cried, as he drew near, "there

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are many horsemen advancing. "Tis like an army, your Grace, and they will be here at once!"

A pallor fell upon Elizabeth's face, but her brave heart rose at the emergency. "Hasten, Launcelot!" she commanded; "rouse the household; I will await the guests here."

Confusion dire and noisy followed fast upon the page's cry. As it echoed through the corridors and halls, servants sprang to life, and the gentlemen and ladies of the household rallied to their mistress' side. And so they waited. They had not long to bide, for almost at once the dust cloud announced the advancing company, and then the glittering uniforms flashed in the sunlight.

With stern, set features, my lady stood firm.

"Ho! my lords!" she cried, as they drew near, "what message do you bear that demands so vast a company to uphold its dignity?"

One dismounted, and, bending lowly before my lady, said reverently: "We put ourselves under the command of your Grace. There are stirring times afoot, my lady, that perchance you wot not of. All Suffolk is at the Princess Mary's side to-day. The Lord of Northumberland, at the head of six thousand men, has proclaimed that he will defend the rights of the Queen Jane Dudley. The kingdom is distraught, my lady;

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the loyal subjects of the late king will rise in defence of his sisters ; and while the Princess Mary rides at the head of her army, we, a thousand strong, await your commands."

"Rise, my lord ! " Elizabeth's voice was deep and strong. "With such a company of true hearts, what may I not undertake, under the grace of God ? Hark you to me ! " A stillness followed. "This day I ride forth to meet my sister, the Princess Mary. Who follows me to uphold her cause, and place her upon the throne of England ? "

"I ! I ! I ! " The cry burst upon the stillness, and echoed far and wide.

Tears of pride, of relief, and joy filled my lady's eyes.

Had one thought of personal advancement entered her quick brain ? If so, it was gone. With her first taste of power she gave herself to the cause of justice, and, ere the day was much older, led that loyal throng away from the comparatively safe shelter of Hatfield, toward the stormy events which were taking place about the little unwilling queen in London town.

And from another quarter of England, at about the same time, rode forth the Princess Mary, Katherine of Arragon's neglected daughter, seeking at last, by a desperate endeavor, to wrench what was her own from the usurper, who even

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then was pining in the Tower because she *must* be a queen.

The look of patient self-abnegation was gone from Princess Mary's face. Under the summer sky she rode with proud, uplifted head. Plain though nature had formed her, no nobler blood ran in woman's veins than surged through hers, and it came to her support now. The sallow skin flushed, and the thin face was almost forgotten when one gazed into the flashing, defiant eyes. Not for herself alone was Mary going forth to do battle ; but to claim the heritage her poor mother had been obliged to renounce. With that thought came another. Where was Elizabeth, and what was she doing while all England was up in arms ?

Mary feared her young sister when she considered her popularity and youthful beauty. She did not trust her, either. She recalled old childish days, when my lady had strutted about as queen, and played Lady Bountiful to her.

The love she had once borne the little sister had long ago died in Mary's heart. Distrust bred hate, and upon that summer day, the Princess Mary wished within her soul, that for once — oh, just for once ! — she might clear her way of *all* obstacles, and wield the power of her queendom without a blighting fear in her heart.

She knew herself, that silent, bitter woman. She knew that in England she was friendless ;

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but no one must suspect that she knew it. So, fearing and hating, she led on, and was perhaps braver for her fear.

Followed by her lusty yeomen and gentry, Mary galloped ahead. The light reflected the glitter of steel ; but mile upon mile was travelled and no foe had appeared. Then an outrider galloped back. " My lady ! " he cried, " a mile beyond is a great company of horsemen and 't is led, your Highness, by no other than the Princess Elizabeth, if my eyes have not played me false."

A sickening thrill for a moment swayed Mary, then in a cold, hard voice she gave the command : " Forward ! "

And so they went with set faces and determined hearts.

" If she oppose me," thought Mary, clenching her hands over the bridle rein, " will my army support me ? "

That was the bitter drop. They might desert her and add ignominy to disappointment. When had she ever been considered if my lady Elizabeth had beckoned ?

When she came in sight of the cavalcade halting by the cross-roads, it became apparent to even Mary's shortsighted eyes that it was Elizabeth, and no other, who led the brilliant company.

" I desire to ride alone, to meet my sister,"

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she said to those nearest her, and, so falling back, the men watched their leader go on ahead.

My lady evidently understood her sister's intention, for she at once left her companions, and came, unattended, down the highway. There was a welcoming smile upon her face.

"Right glad am I for this happy chance!" she cried, as she drew near; "'t is as it should be, sister, that you and I ride up together to uphold our common cause."

Her words and manner puzzled Mary. "What mean you," she faltered, "by the common cause?"

"Our cause is our father's decree; we ride forth to-day to uphold it against them who, by vile intrigue, would overthrow it. Sister, I and this goodly company place ourselves at your command. Lead, and we follow."

For a moment Mary's eyes dimmed. Her words caught in her throat; then she stretched forth her gauntleted hand, and, speaking low, made reply: "I desire that we ride side by side, Elizabeth. May the Holy Mother plead our cause this day!"

The slow smile spread over my lady's face. Her girlish heart cared little who plead their cause; with that glittering and numerous army to support them, she feared no great opposition, and, young as she was, she knew that Mary's cause was the safer because she, Elizabeth Tudor,

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had espoused it. Thus the warrior maids, side by side, united their forces, and rode bravely on.

And up in London town, my Lord of Northumberland had brought fair little Queen Jane to the Tower, and all the counsellors were obliged to come with her to the fortress. If trouble *did* arise, my lord did not intend having his helpers free to save themselves, or bring disgrace upon *him*. They were safer while his hand was upon them. It was a common thing for a new king or queen to spend his or her first days in the Tower. Jane knew this, yet the closing of the heavy doors shut out joy and sunshine from her heart.

Surely the world had never seen a sadder queen than Jane !

"I would that I knew my cousin Elizabeth approved my course," she whispered tearfully to her father, "and Mary too, she was always kind to me. I like not to harm her or appear ungrateful."

"They will realize," said the new duke, her father, "that you are moved by the highest motives for the nation's good."

"I trust that they will at least give me that credit," sighed the queen. "'Tis much I am renouncing. My own kingdom," she smiled through her tears at her boyish husband, "my own sweet, free life. All, all, that my soul loves. Surely no queen has ever given more. My lord," turning to

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Northumberland, "does the sunlight ever creep within the Tower; or can one hear the song of birds? My blood chills at the stillness and shadows; I like not the place."

My Lord of Northumberland had his hands full in keeping this little prisoned queen in hopeful mood, while hiding the commotion of the people from her, but he did his best, and gave orders to the council to proclaim Jane Queen of England throughout the empire.

The proclamation went little further than London, however, and the mobs heard it in silence.

One daring youth even led a small riot near the Tower by shouting out in derision the doings of the great lord. This poor apprentice was caught at once and severely punished, but his daring had fired others, and contempt and scorn followed thick and fast upon the proclamation. Fear fell upon those within the Tower, but the little queen knew not the meaning of it all.

And while London seethed with the excitement, the two warrior maids were hastening on.

At last my Lord of Northumberland realized that he must resort to arms if he would hold back the approaching foe, which, he was warned, was rapidly advancing. His cowardly heart, now that he saw danger at close quarters, quailed within him; but what could he do? He mustered

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the troops that were at his command ; impressed upon those in charge of the queen loyally to defend her and her rights, and then went onward to meet — what ?

“ See ! ” he said nervously to the lord who rode at his right hand, “ what means this gaping crowd ? List ! do you hear one word of blessing from among them ? ”

“ Not one ! ” quoth the lord.

All upon a summer’s day they reached St. Edmondsbury, and, behold ! the warrior maids were there before them with an army so outnumbering theirs that no thought of battle entered Northumberland’s quaking heart.

With all speed he despatched a letter to London, imploring aid, and, while he waited, those trusted dukes and lords who were so gallantly defending Queen Jane took the opportunity to slip their own bolts and bars, and make for freedom and less exalted ambitions.

While my Lord of Northumberland hesitated, with his coward heart sore distressed, news reached him that Mary had been proclaimed queen ; that the fleet sent to Yarmouth to detain her, should she try to escape, had gone over to her side, and were now most loyally attaching themselves to her cause.

What was left for the proud lord to do ? He forgot the pale little queen in the gloomy Tower,

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who, by his avarice, had given up the fair kingdom of love which had been hers, and was even then waiting to ascend the throne while the heavy crown bore her down. My Lord of Northumberland forgot everything but his craven fear of personal harm. So, straightway he journeyed back to Cambridge, and there indeed the rumor was confirmed. London, yes: even the guards of the Tower had espoused Mary's cause, and he, the great lord, was cautioned not to come within six miles of London, or the troops which he had fondly thought were his own would fight against him.

Oh, the bitterness and disgrace !
Gone was his glory and power all in a summer day !

What was he ? Nothing ! nothing ! He, the power that for so long had stood behind the throne !

There was just one thing remaining for him to try. Right joyously he ran through the streets of Cambridge, tossing his cap in the air, proclaiming his loyalty to Mary, and showing every sign of rejoicing.

The army surrounding the lord scattered like frightened sheep when they beheld their leader's alarm ; each man went where his fancy or necessity took him, but Northumberland was not so lucky. For all his sudden conversion, he was not trusted.

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The Mayor of Cambridge, shaking with new courage and old fear, laid hands of authority upon the once mighty Northumberland, and insisted that he should bide where he was until orders should come from London.

Downcast and wretched was Northumberland. He, who had so lightly taken life and liberty from others, did stagger when a like danger faced him. He became most humble, and almost servile to the good Mayor ; and that personage strutted grandly at his own daring.

Then letters came from London.

All the army was ordered to disperse, and those of them who had not already done so, hastened to comply with the command.

For a moment hope came to the lord in his prison-house.

If *all* were to depart, that included him. Glad enough was he now to be reckoned with the horde. Those in charge of him could not see but that he was included, and for a night my lord breathed the free air while he made ready to depart. But at daybreak came the Lord of Arundel, all booted and spurred, and right into Northumberland's bed-chamber he strode, without begging leave, and then and there informed him that, even as he had been great in his day of power, so was he great in his day of misfortune. Others were free to go whither they chose, but he was different from

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them, more to be feared ; the country was safer with him a prisoner than while he remained a free subject, so the key must turn upon him again.

Northumberland became at once a whimpering beggar. He pleaded for mercy from any source whatever. He would become a convert to the Catholic religion ; he would join the company that was to bring Queen Mary up to London ; on his knees would he swear allegiance to the crown. He was no worse than others ; surely he deserved no greater punishment.

But the locks were turned upon the suppliant lord ; he was left alone with his thoughts to keep him company until such time as he was set free to go before a higher judge than any in Mary's realm.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

GOD SAVE QUEEN MARY

GAD!" cried my lady, gazing from her chamber in Somerset House, "the world seems to have gone mad over my sister Mary. Now who would have thought she could arouse such enthusiasm?" A little sigh fluttered out upon the summer air.

Since Northumberland's downfall at Cambridge Mary had returned to Framlingham. She felt comparatively sure of her position, but it was as well to be near the sea in case the people changed their minds, and took to shouting for another.

My lady had not accompanied her sister, but had tarried in quiet near London, until upon a certain July day she had heard that Mary was to be brought up to London by her loyal subjects, and in case the report was true, she, the queen's sister, was in no mood to lie hidden longer. If she could not wear the crown herself, my lady meant always to be as close to the throne as possible. So she had come up to Somerset House to be near the

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centre of action. And indeed, the commotion below, as she looked from her window, stirred her strangely.

The air was full of rumors, and even from her trusted companions my lady gathered so many diverse reports of the great doings that she found herself in sore perplexity.

“The crowds are filling the streets ! ” she mused, “and belike they are in high spirits. Hither, Nan ! ” she called to one of her ladies, who was bustling about the room, doing little, but causing much noise in the doing of it ; “why do you not talk much, and tell me the gossip ? ”

“Your ladyship desired me to hold my tongue not five minutes since.”

“Then loose it now, I pray you, for my mood for silence is past. What say the gentlemen in attendance, do they bring the queen, my sister, up to London ? ”

“Aye, and they do, your Grace ! ” the little lady seemed bursting with gossip, now that speech was possible.

“I bid you tell me everything you have heard,” commanded Elizabeth ; “as I live, I feel like a ghost coming back to the haunts of men. From the confusion of many tongues ‘t is little of the real feeling of the people I have gathered. Now, Nan, sit you here in the window-seat, and while we watch the show below, tell me what has oc-

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curred while I have been faring afar, and you have tarried here."

The two girls sank down upon the cushions, and Nan burst forth: "Such doings, your Grace, the world has never seen in my time."

"The world saw a thing or two before your time, Nan," laughed my lady; "but go on, I swear I believe you, for the crowd looks as if it had gone through something."

"Well, your ladyship, it was ten days ago that Queen Mary — God save her Majesty —"

"Belike you are a good Catholic," broke in my lady, with a smile.

"I have been converted, your Grace, within the week," blushed Nan.

"So soon?" sneered Elizabeth, under her smile, "Well, 't were better to be on the safe side. Go on!"

"I think I was saying the queen was proclaimed ten days ago," faltered little Nan, who, under the fire of Elizabeth's eye, was oddly embarrassed.

"You were calling upon God to save her Majesty," interrupted my lady. "Her Majesty may need saving from many evils, so your thoughtfulness should not be overlooked. Believing, therefore, that God has hearkened to you, proceed, I pray you, to the proclamation."

"The people went mad as the words were read," Nan continued; "I donned a servant's livery, and

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went out upon the streets. I would not have missed being one of the throng that day for my hope of a new gown. The air was full of caps, as the men tossed them aloft. Little cared any one whether he got his own cap or not ; he seized the one nearest him, and tossed it again. And such shouting, your Grace ! as Heaven hears me, I was obliged to clap my hands over my ears, or the chances are that I would have been deaf. People threw money from the windows ; I caught some myself ; and the bonfires, my lady, they were without number, and made hotter a day none too cool. The bells clanged, and the people sang, and the masses elbowed each other, till 't was as much as one's life was worth to be among them.

“ Being carried willy-nilly by the mob, I found myself near the Tower, and, as I gazed about, I saw the crowd in front of me pointing and jeering ; and then, your Grace — ” Nan's voice grew husky with excitement — “ I saw his Highness, the new Duke of Suffolk ! Close at his heels came others of his followers, and I thought that surely the crowd would fall upon the cowards and rend them. I covered my eyes, to spare myself the horror of such a scene, but, as I peeped through my fingers, — I swear I speak truly, — the duke was shouting not for Lady Jane Dudley, but Queen Mary, your Grace ! He looked as if he would burst with his exertions. My fingers Itched,

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then, my lady, to scratch my lord's eyes out, for I thought of his poor daughter, my Lady Dudley, who, by the wrong of others, is eating her heart out in misery, they do say, within the gloom of the Tower!"

"Careful, Nan!" cautioned Elizabeth, "for a good Catholic and a loyal subject of her Majesty the Queen, you are pitying too publicly the usurper, Jane Dudley."

"My lady," quivered Nan, "all true hearts must ache for Jane Dudley, be they Catholic or Protestant; and I am sure when the queen comes into London she will free at once that gentle prisoner, who, they do say, pines ever for the quiet of her home and the love of her young lord."

"Does my Lord Dudley share his wife's confinement, Nan?" In Elizabeth's eyes there were tears, but the eyes were turned away.

"He shares it, my lady, but apart. 'T is said that Jane Dudley has leave to walk in the gardens, but Lord Dudley fares not so well."

"'T is limited justice," sighed my lady.

"Aye, and it is, your Grace!" There was a sob in Nan's voice. "They do say," Nan went on, controlling herself, "that the very day the proclamation was made, divers lords abiding at the time in Cambridge, keeping an eye upon his lordship of Northumberland, did ride to Framlingham, to announce the proclamation to her Grace the

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queen. "Tis rumored that Northumberland himself was of the party."

"Gad!" laughed my lady, "that would seem too huge a joke upon his Grace. To fight against the queen one day and then kneel humbly to her the next would seem a farce indeed."

"My Lord of Northumberland," smiled Nan, "has become the most graceful of kneelers, my lady,—he kneels to all, without discrimination. Belike he is practising for the confessional; I have heard his lordship is to accept the faith."

"Tis like his lordship so to do," sneered Elizabeth; "I never heard that Northumberland hesitated at accepting anything that added to his safety."

Nan turned crimson, but my lady heeded her not; she was thinking of the lonely little usurper in the Tower, who by this same lord's greed was made to suffer such sad loss.

"Since the twenty-fourth of July," Nan babbled on, "six men on horseback, all beautifully decked out like soldiers in very truth, have waited upon Sir Thomas Tresham. They say that these gentlemen are among those chosen to guard her sacred Majesty up to London. I have kept my eye on this guard, for when they depart, belike great times are at hand."

"Not so long need you wait, Nan," laughed my lady; "never long in ignorance am I. To-morrow

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we sally forth to meet the queen. Arrangements are all made. I shall drive through Cheapside to greet her Majesty; 't is fitting that I should be among the first to bid my sister and sovereign welcome."

"Have I your Grace's permission to be one of the party?" fluttered Nan, agog at the thought of all the excitement and splendor.

"That you have!" my lady rejoined; "as large a following as I can have, will please me mightily. Go you, Nan, and set the others in a flutter."

My lady's following was a goodly one, and very splendid did her Grace appear, as she drove through Cheapside on that brilliant August day to meet her sister Mary. When the two noble companies met, very loyally and regally did Elizabeth take her place behind her sister, and so they came into London town.

Mary's face was almost radiant with triumph. Doubt and distrust fled for the moment; the world, her world, seemed to lie before her. Never had she tasted power, but the past few weeks had made her surer of herself and her future. She would go slowly, but she would have her way. The past should be blotted out. She would win her subjects if she could; if not —

The queen, in her golden chariot, smiled her rare smile, and those who caught sight of it for-

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got how warm the sunlight was, for it seemed as if a cloud had passed.

In Elizabeth's chariot, which was silver covered, sat good Anne Cleves. 'T was a late day for her to share in the splendors surrounding an English queen; but since she had become a Catholic, Mary had espoused her cause, and wished to honor her.

My lady, remembering old days, sighed and smiled as she gazed into plain Anne's face, as she sat facing her in the chariot.

"It seems a mighty force was needed to bring my sister up to court," queried Elizabeth, straining her eyes right and left to look upon the company.

"Aye," returned Anne, dryly; "Lord Arundel estimates that the whole number is ten thousand."

"Gad! does this mean honor or dire necessity?" said my lady.

"Who knows?" sighed Anne.

"Look!" cried Elizabeth, "the queen's carriage is halting; now what is the meaning of that? They have stopped before a stand," she went on merrily, shading her eyes from the glare. Then, as her own carriage drew near and paused, she saw the meaning of it all. "The people have erected a platform," she exclaimed; "and see, Anne, it is crowded with poor children! Ah, the innocents! Can you see their faces, Anne?

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They shine forth like flowers under the sun's rays.

"List! One of them is reading. God bless the precious! Oh, were I the queen, I would make glad their hearts this day. Can you catch a word?"

Anne shook her head.

"See!" my lady went on, her bright eyes overflowing with tenderness, as she watched the scene, "the little lassie is nodding and beaming upon the queen,—and the queen? As God hears me, Anne, the queen is turning away from that little one; she is scorning those innocent, welcoming words! 'Tis a bad omen for her to spurn so pure and gentle a thing. See! she has ordered the company to proceed, and the poor little waifs are saddened; this has meant so much to them. I will try to salve their wounded feelings; here, Anne, bow and smile! Toss flowers to them!"

The rows of disappointed faces on the stand changed to merriment, as my lady nodded and waved her hands.

"Long live her Grace, Elizabeth!" piped the shrill childlike voices; and so shouting, they forgot their cry of "Long live the queen!"

Mary heard, and her uplifted heart sank. All the fire and half-beauty fled from her features. The sullen look returned to the dull eyes, and

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the flush of excitement gave place to the sallow tone that was habitual.

Compared with her brilliant young sister, she looked old and haggard, and the bitterness came back to her soul. So, with drooping courage, she went up to take possession of what was her own at last.

As they neared the Tower, a great peal from the guns rent the air. At the Tower gate the Duke of Norfolk, the Duke of Courtney, the Bishop of Winchester, and Lady Somerset met her Grace the queen. Very humbly they knelt and kissed her hand, and the deed touched her cold heart.

“I come to the Tower,” she smiled, as she returned their salute; “are you, then, my prisoners? If so, for your loyalty I will honor you.” And, indeed, before many days she made Lord Courtney Earl of Devonshire.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

SHE WHO WAS ONCE A QUEEN

A H me, ten days was I a queen, yet glad enough was I to lay aside the crown. The diadem did pierce me like a thorn, and happy am I to be released from all the weary state."

Little Jane, within her prison-house, sighed, then smiled and sighed again. "Methinks, now that my cousin Mary has her own, she might give thought and time enough to turn the key that keeps me from *my* own."

She paused ; the stillness made her shudder. What was the great, busy life of London doing ? Why did no echo of the seething tumult surrounding the new queen reach her, who sat so forlorn and homesick within the sombre Tower ?

Why should they detain her ? She longed only for home and freedom ; why this delay ?

"I wonder," with a pitiful catch in her voice, "if they have all forgotten me ? Even my father and mother have gone from out the Tower, and they come not back again to set me free ; they who

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bade me leave my freedom ! Oh, if I could only hear what is going on ! Jacobs ! ”

“ My lady ! ” An elderly woman had entered the apartment, and little Jane turned to her eagerly.

“ I am lonely, Jacobs ; pray tell me, is there news from without ? Do you hear aught of the queen or the Lady Elizabeth ? ”

The serving-woman shook her head. “ Nay, your ladyship, ‘t is as if the world had passed on and left us in this dull place.”

“ I am over young, Jacobs, to be forgotten. Pray tell me if my husband, Lord Guilford, fares well ? He alone shares my imprisonment.”

“ Master Partridge has just told my man, your ladyship, that as much leniency is shown Lord Dudley as is possible ; he has the freedom of the leads near his windows.”

“ Poor love ! ” murmured little Jane, going to the casement and peering out into the gloom. “ Have they so fettered your dear limbs that only so far you can go, and no farther ? Ah, sweet-heart, for the empty glory of a throne we gave up much.” The fair head was pressed against the glass, and the tender lips quivered. “ Jacobs ! ”

“ Yes, my lady.”

“ I have a fancy to dine with Partridge to-night. Think you that he would grant the favor ? ”

“ My lady ! ” Jacobs threw up her hands.

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Prison locks could not change her belief in the divine rights of royalty.

“Oh, I know,” smiled Jane, “time was when I conferred the greatest favor by requesting one to dine with me, but times are changed. The shadows haunt me to-night. I would choke were I to eat alone; I bid you, as you love me, Jacobs, go ask my keeper and friend if he will save me from myself by permitting me to share his meal.” With bowed head Jacobs left the room. What request of her beloved mistress would she disregard? But, indeed, times were changed.

She was soon back with the warden by her side.
“Tis a strange request, your ladyship, that Jacobs brings. We are not meet companions for the Lady Dudley’s board.”

“Good Partridge, Lady Dudley has no board, and those who by blood should be her companions have left her to her sad fate. I humbly beg you, who are friends of darker days, to spare me the anguish of my bitter fears, by giving me your company.”

“I beseech you, my lady, not to lose heart. After the coronation, the queen will give heed to your miserable condition, and brighter days will come.”

“I know not, Partridge. This place fills me with apprehension.”

There was a pause, then Partridge said: “There

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is a guest dining with me to-night, your ladyship. Not utterly unworthy of your notice is he; one Rowland Lea by name, and, if it please you to so honor us, we will share alike below stairs."

"Good Partridge, and it does please me mightily. Go, Jacobs, prepare a toilet for me worthy of the notice of these friends of adversity."

The girlish face grew brighter at the thought of change. Suddenly Lady Jane went close to Partridge and whispered: "Is it within your power, good friend, to bid my husband join us, just for this once?"

"It grieves me deeply, your ladyship, to refuse any request you proffer; but it is not within my power, as warden, to permit what I, as the *servant* of Lady Dudley, would hasten to comply with." Partridge bowed humbly.

"I pray you, good friend," murmured Lady Jane, placing a small trembling hand upon his arm, "think not again of my desire. The etiquette of a prison is new to me; 't is more rigid even than that at court."

The tears shone above the brave smile.

A little later, gowned in rich velvet and attended by Jacobs, and Jacobs' husband, Lady Jane entered the apartment of Partridge and his wife. They arose at her entrance, and their guest, who had but a moment before arrived, flushed with surprise.

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"I knew not that so distinguished a guest as Lady Dudley was to be our companion." Lea smiled courteously, for the manner of the court clung to him.

"'Tis as a suppliant she comes," smiled little Jane, "and by the goodness of our host. I pray you, be seated, good comrades," Jane took the seat pointed out to her by Partridge at the board's head. Unconsciously she assumed the place as hostess, and indeed it seemed most fitting. "If it please you, sirs," with her pretty smile, "put on your caps. Unless I feel myself as one of you, my joy in your society will be less."

Lea and Partridge with but a poor grace complied with her ladyship's request.

Then, taking her glass, little Jane drank right merrily to the health of all, and repeated her supplication that they should allow her to share their meal.

During the meal, as if hungry for news of the outer world, she said, leaning her elbows on the board and glancing at Lea with her great soft eyes:

"The Queen's Majesty is a merciful princess ; I beseech God she may long continue, and that he send His bountiful grace upon her."

The party around the table started. Strange words were these to fall from the lips of her who, by the lack of mercy in the new queen, was languishing in her doleful Tower.

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But no expression of aught save gentle goodness rested upon the fair face turned toward Lea.

"I mind me of old days," Jane went on. "My cousin, now the queen, was of a godly temper. She was never dealt justly by, as God hears me; I trust that now she will prove to all that her godliness was deep and true and merciful."

Jacobs lowered her head, and a silence followed. Then,—

"I pray you, have they mass in London? The queen was ever a rigid Catholic."

"In some places," answered Lea.

"Sudden conversions, like the late Earl of Northumberland's, will doubtless follow," a faint sneer rested on the girlish mouth. "My mind runs not to cruelty," she said, "but if ever a man met his just fate, 't was my lord. By his greed and selfishness he has brought many to disgrace, and though he was the father of my lord and husband, I cannot find it in my heart to forgive him."

"Your ladyship has cause to think bitterly," said Partridge; "my lord did use too mercilessly his power; but he knew it at the end, and confessed the same before men, beseeching leniency for them he had wronged."

A shadow fell upon Jane's face.

"When the warmth of the free sunlight shines

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upon me," she sighed, "I may find it in my heart to forgive. Hardness has never been my crying sin, but I know not myself. I am young in years, and life is sweet, but I would not cry for mercy of my queen by foregoing my principles; nor would my cousin, as I know her, exact such false penitence. The Princess Mary was ever plain and honest, and the queen, I trust, shames not the princess. Northumberland could hardly hope for favor by feigning sham conversion."

"He did, your ladyship." Lea gazed into the sweet, questioning face.

"Then," she smiled, "I fancy that my lord's greatness was but a thin mantle. I would that I had known him better that day at Zion House when he besought me so fervently to consider the Reformation, and all that it meant; then all too weakly I laid down my happiness for the burden of a heavy crown."

There were tears in the eyes of the women, and the men dropped their gaze from the young, suffering face.

"Master Lea," Lady Jane continued, "does my cousin, the Lady Elizabeth, bide with the queen, her sister?"

"She does, your ladyship, and a rarer beauty the court has not seen for many a day."

Lea sought, by this new thought, to turn the conversation in cheerier channels.

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"And do you know, good friend, when the coronation is like to be?"

"Tis rumored, about the end of September, my lady."

"And will the queen come to the Tower for the event?" There was a childish yearning in the question.

"Without doubt, my lady," Lea replied.

"Then," with a soft little laugh, "I think I see it all. T was ever the part of my cousin, the Lady Elizabeth, to plan pretty scenes. I doubt not but that, upon the coronation day, my cousin, the queen, at the Lady Elizabeth's wish, as well as her own, will show favor to my Lord Guilford Dudley and me by publicly opening our doors. Twould be a great scene, and one to delight my cousin's heart," laughed Jane.

"God grant it, my lady!" murmured the company; but the joyous smile rested alone upon her little ladyship's lips.

"Oh, I warrant," she rippled on, "that this is the plan. Tis so like the Lady Elizabeth that I wonder the thought did not occur before. No longer will I languish in doubt, good Partridge. Most willingly will I await the pleasure of my queen!"¹

Soon after the dinner-party broke up. Lady Dudley, with a new look of hope upon her gentle

¹ This scene is historical.

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face, was escorted to her Tower room, while Lea went back to the troubled life of London, which was already pulsing with fear at rumors and veiled commands that were floating about.

Now, upon the last of September, the queen came to the Tower for her coronation.

Her sister Elizabeth was with her, and the contrast between the two was the gossip of the day.

All the old bitterness had come back to Mary's face. The flush of triumph had been short-lived.

If whispers from court had made the populace uneasy, none the less had the people's whispers stirred the queen. She distrusted every one; most of all, perhaps, the beautiful sister by her side.

"I will put every one, everything, beneath my feet," she thought, "that dares to stand between me and my power." And the intention became fixed upon the sallow face; while my little lady smiled her slow smile, and very humbly did homage to the new queen, realizing, as she scanned the cruel face, that only in that way could she hope for favor.

The queen rode in a chariot covered with golden tissue. Her gown was of blue velvet, lined with snow-white ermine. So heavy was the circlet round her head with precious stones that again and again was she forced to hold it in place. This gave the queen such an undignified air that Elizabeth, riding behind in her chariot covered with

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silver tissue, was feign to crack, with Anne of Cleves, who rode facing her, a most unsisterly joke. “I pray you, good Anne, look at her Majesty, with the diadem cocked over one eye, as true as I speak, she seems more like an effigy of Bacchus than England’s queen.”

“I beseech you, Bess,” smiled Anne, in spite of herself, for a joke was always a joke to her, did the sun shine or not, “I beseech you, be over careful with your tongue. This is going to be no reign of mirth and joy; and a side glance at her Majesty Queen Mary will soon be regarded as high treason. I know the signs. I have not lived in vain.”

“God knows you have not, good Anne, but Mary is your friend.”

“And I am yours, Bess. Hark!”

A volley of shots from the Tower shook the air.

Little Jane in her prison-room heard the peal, and her heart rose at the sound.

“Jacobs!” she cried, “what think you of that?”

The gentle woman, standing near by, made answer: “Your ladyship, ‘t is to announce the queen’s approach.”

“How long, good friend, do you think it will be before I am free?” Oh, the world of homesick longing in the faint, girlish voice.

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“By the mercy of God and the queen, I trust before long, my lady!” Jacobs could not hide her tears.

“And my gown, Jacobs, how does it become me? I am most woful thin!”

“Your ladyship never looked more beautiful.”

“Fie, Jacobs, your compliments are meant well; but what think you my Lord Guilford would say?”

“Surely, my lady, words would be useless things on Lord Dudley’s lips were he to see you now.”

“True, true!” smiled little Jane, with the dream-light in her eyes, “love needs no idle speech, and it covers all weakness. Go, Jacobs, I implore you, and ask good Partridge if my cousin is crowned to-day? I scarce can refrain my joy. Think of freedom again! And the open skies, and the stir of young, living things! Oh, my heart bursts with anticipation. What is a kingdom’s throne to the world of life and love? Hasten, Jacobs, and bring me the glad news.”

It was not until the next day that the queen came, by water, to the Tower. So great an event could not be hidden from the lonely prisoners, and little Jane was no longer in doubt. She knew that the queen had arrived with her great and noble company. She knew that the Lady Elizabeth was with them; but the hours dragged on, and no one came to set her free, or summon her

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to take part in the wonderful scene which she had trustingly imagined was going to take place. Her heart grew sick with dread and disappointment.

Had they forgotten?

Oh, no! Many things of grave import had to be performed. Did she not know, she who had been herself a queen for ten summer days? The wan smile returned. After the ceremonies they would come!

Mary should see her kneel and vow allegiance. She herself would explain why she had done the wrong which others had made for the moment seem like virtue.

Mary would forgive, when she understood how *glad* she was to be just little Jane again. And Elizabeth! How the thought of my lady dispelled the gloom! How strong and brave was dear Bess, with her wonderful wit and her merry tongue! Surely she was longing to set the captive cousin free. Bess, who so loved liberty herself!

The afternoon sun was waning. The damp shadows drew closer among the Tower crannies. Still little Jane waited.

Suddenly the door was opened by an unseen hand, and, gliding in from the outer gloom, came — my lady! Her finger was raised in caution, and a wild, hunted look filled her eyes.

“Little Jane!” she moaned, “where are you, dear heart?”

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Too frightened to move, Jane stood near the casement, clinging to the heavy drapery for support.

After a moment Elizabeth saw her and ran to her side. She took her in her arms and crooned over her as a mother might have done. "Only a moment, sweetheart," she quivered; "but oh, dear love, how white and thin you have grown while I was far away!"

"Bess!" Jane's voice sounded distant and cold, "have you come to set me free?"

"No." My lady dropped to her knees and grasped her cousin's hand.

A moment, fraught with agony, followed, while those two girls of Tudor stock faced the stern future with clear, unfaltering eyes. Too well they knew the dangers of a court not to realize the deadly peril.

"What means the queen to do with me?" Jane asked at length, while she caressed the ruddy hair pressed against her. In that awful hour her blood came to her rescue, and she faltered not.

"Sweetheart, 't is breathed that the council will bring you to trial." My lady shook with emotion as she knelt before that slim, undaunted girl.

"For what, Bess?"

"Upon a charge of treason, little one, but, mind you, 't is only hearsay as yet."

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"Seek not to comfort me, dear Bess," sighed Jane ; and, looking over the golden head into the gathering gloom, she seemed to see all the empty future. "I dreamed, but now am I awake. So used you to wake me, dear love, in the old happy days. Do you remember, Bess, how you bestirred me oft at daybreak, that I might learn my task ? I see the hard task before me now, dear ; I go to the doing of it. I, so young, and as God hears me, so innocent of this foul charge, *must learn to die !* Ah, Bess, I gave up more when they did crown me ; for now, if I go out of life, I go not alone. He, my own dear love, will go also, and beyond these troubled wakings and sleepings we shall love without fear." She spoke as a seer, that fair little maid, and my lady at her feet gazed in amaze.

"Speak not so, dear Jane," she whispered. "I dared not deceive you : I felt I must tell you the rumor ; but I will urge with what power I have, and mercy may still move the queen."

"Bess, think you, in your heart, that I dare hope ?"

My lady dropped her wide, fear-filled eyes.

"I dare not say !" she moaned ; and the whisper joined the myriads, which filled the Tower memories.

"Sweet Bess," little Jane had become the comforter now, "this place is but an echo of the

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past and a prophecy of the future. They who have gone before have left their impress, and that helps me to follow on. 'Tis a place of ghosts and visions. They come to warn and comfort me. As others went, so can I go, and from here will I step out into the glory, untouched by earthly sin. I shall not fear, believe me. Kiss me, sweet cousin ; ever true have you been to me. Never truer than now, when you come to bid me cease to hope. One less merciful than you could have wrought upon me more harshly."

The cousins were clinging together, Elizabeth's sobs the only sound in the dull silence.

"My Lady Elizabeth ! " 'Twas Partridge's voice from out the gloom of the doorway ; " hasten, my lady, or your absence will be noted. 'Tis six of the clock, and the Queen's Majesty is leaving for the church."

For a moment there was silence in that prison-room, then, in a voice strange, because of its new courage, little Jane said : " Farewell, dear Bess, let not my fate mar your brilliant life. I would seem an unworthy friend did I, in passing, draw you back."

" Farewell !" breathed my lady, as, with bowed head, she left the dreary room. " Farewell, farewell, my cousin Jane, farewell ! "

CHAPTER NINETEEN

AT THE COURT OF THE QUEEN

HAVE I your Majesty's permission to be seated?" The mock reverence in my lady's tone would have been noticed by any one less engrossed than the queen.

She was pacing up and down the rich chamber, a troubled look upon her face and an impatient tone in her sharp voice, as she said: "Oh, be seated, Bess, an it please you; and now tell me this tale you are so bursting to impart."

Taking advantage of the permission, Elizabeth dropped in a deep chair, and, clasping her hands before her, fixed her eyes upon her sister's face.

My lady always gauged her conversation by the expression of that thin, nervous countenance. She had learned when to stop, and how far to go, and much depended upon her ability to read aright.

"As your Grace may know, Partridge's wife is ill in the Tower, and I went to carry fruit to her." Elizabeth did not state that because of the

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goodness Partridge and his wife had shown to little Jane, she was their friend forever.

Mary let the words pass with an absent nod.

"And then," my lady went on, "I stopped to see the animals; they are a *great* resource to them who, by your gracious favor, have partial liberty. The lions that our father did place there are doing finely, and are held in superstitious regard by the inmates. They believe, should any harm befall these beasts, it would signify disaster to the Tudors!"

"Your tale waxes dull," said Mary, stopping in her walk; "is it for such nursery babble that I have left my state business? The Tower is a strange pleasure-ground for a princess who is at liberty"—there was a sneer in the queen's voice,—"to choose her pleasure places. I advise you, as a sister *and* a sovereign, to look higher than that castle to bestow your gracious presence and your bounty."

My lady ignored the sneer, and proceeded calmly, still eyeing the sharp face of her sister.

"T was while I was looking at the beasts, your Grace, that I noticed a young man near by. He had a book in his hand, and a nobler face it has never been my privilege to see, than the one which bent above the pages."

"Must seek your gallants within the Tower, Bess?" laughed Mary, grimly; "it bespeaks poverty

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at court, or"—with a slow break—"a mistaken estimate of the charms of my Princess Elizabeth."

My lady flushed hotly.

"As your Highness knows," she rejoined, "I await the example of my sister, the queen, in marriage, as in all else."

"T was her Majesty's turn to color now, and she did it with no good grace.

"Proceed!" she commanded, and resumed her restless walk.

"I asked Partridge the name of the man; 'tis Courteney, your Grace, and a prisoner by order of our father."

"Our father?" Mary halted; "and you say a young man? What crime did he commit that so long he has endured imprisonment without trial?"

"'T is the saddest tale my ears have heard for many a day, sister. I did speak to the young man himself; and, I pray you, believe me, I did so as much for your good heart as for my own curiosity. I believe, once the wrong is known to you, the undoing of it will not linger."

"I wish to be merciful, where mercy is merited," mused the queen, and she sighed wearily.

My lady thought of little Jane, and the color fled from her face.

"'T is not easy always to be able to grant mercy," Mary continued. "'T is no light matter

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this, of being queen. Ofttimes, where my heart goes, my wisdom forbids. Mercy should not always flow *from* the throne; too often is it sadly needed there."

My lady raised her eyes to the sallow face. There were moments when the old child-love and sympathy for the plain sister moved her yet.

"Truly you speak," she faltered; "I mind me long ago that one of my father's queens bade me remember that too heavily the crown rested upon a woman's head. Remembering your burden, sister, I bring you this tale of wrong, for in the showing of mercy, shall you reap happiness."

"Go on, Bess."

"Well, this Courtenay has done no wrong, indeed, no charge is brought against him except that he is the son of one who, for political reasons, did incur our father's wrath. This boy was taken from his home when but twelve years of age, and since then has known no love or liberty but those which flourish within the Tower walls."

"'T is most amazing!" the queen exclaimed; "and how old is this prisoner now?"

"Twenty-six, your Grace. 'T was a trick of our father's to make the innocent suffer for the guilty," said my lady, bitterly. "Do you remember Barnaby Fitz Patrick when first he came to court for his father's offence?"

"Aye. But blood will tell. Since our brother's

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death this same Barnaby is giving much trouble. 'T was but a night or so ago he fell upon a priest, and would have beaten him sore but for the interference of a guard. The lad is in irons now, but I know not what to do with him."

"I pray you, send him home to Ireland!" pleaded my lady. "His mission here is done."

"Can I trust him?" Mary's voice sank.

"I will stand for him," Elizabeth replied, and a mist rose to her blue eyes.

"But this other hostage," the queen went on, "will he not take vengeance upon the house that so bitterly has wronged him? He must be a sad fool, having missed the years of learning. Mayhap during those empty years he has but educated himself to hate."

My lady bent forward at this, and raised her finger to point her remark.

"That is where your Majesty errs in imagination. This same Courteney is a rare scholar, with manners of a courtier. A more charming gallant kneels not before your Highness than this innocent sufferer for a father's errors."

"You amaze me!" Mary stood before her sister, her face full of interest. "And if this be true, we have material for a knight indeed. Full of learning, you say, and untouched by court intrigue. Having no hatred in so noble a heart, there is place for gratitude; and if we win this

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gentleman to our side, he may stand for us when troubles arise."

"Your Majesty's instinct is marvellous!" cried my lady, jumping to her feet and clapping her hands. "Tis so I reasoned myself, and God knows there are none too many loyal hearts near *any* throne. I pray your Grace to remember this good turn I have done, should all result well."

And so in due time young Courteney was released from the Tower, and, by the queen's command, came to court, that her Highness might gaze upon this marvel of wisdom, who knew no hate toward them who had bitterly wronged him.

When first the glory of freedom and court favor shone upon Courteney, he required all his native nobility to help him on his way.

He was, indeed, untouched by hatred and intrigue, and became a prime favorite at once, from the queen to the meanest lordling at court. But, for all his book learning, young Courteney was not wise; he gave homage where, to his simple mind, homage was due, and it was my lady, and not the queen, to whom he bowed in heart reverence.

Mary bestowed land upon him and a goodly title. He thanked her in true appreciation, but he kept his eyes upon the Princess Elizabeth.

This stirred her Majesty the Queen to a most

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undignified degree. Was there not one heart in all the world that she could win for her very own? She dared not have Elizabeth away from her personal observation, but with her near, who ever looked at the queen?

Oh, the uselessness of ever trying to be loved and worshipped for herself!

"Why seek you the Princess Elizabeth so constantly?" she inquired of Courteney one day. "It is to *me* your reverence and duty are owed."

"Your Highness is unjust in that," Courteney made reply. He knew no fear, and spoke as a child, for all his courtly demeanor. "While your Grace has bestowed bountifully since your attention has been called to my unworthy self, 't was her ladyship, the Princess Elizabeth, who found me in my prison-house, and, by the light of her gracious goodness, made me her slave forever!"

The queen frowned.

"Well, then, Sir Knight, we will grant that the Lady Elizabeth has set you free by her pleadings, suppose one should desire to set your feet in a high place in the realm, where then would your heart go?"

"Your Highness, better a prison-house and a free fancy than a fettered soul. 'T would be no freedom, my queen, were the heart restrained."

Mary frowned bitterly. What was her dream? A kingdom, so far, had not been a tempting

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enough dowry to dazzle the world ; and, unsought, she went her way. Now, here was a gallant who should, by all rights, be at her command. She might raise or lower him, but his words daunted her. A shame filled her heart, then a madness; and in that mood she sent for her sister.

“ Did you plead this Lord Courteney’s cause,” she demanded, “ that you might dangle another victim on your chains ? ”

“ As Heaven is my witness, sister,” cried my lady, “ I know not what you mean ! ”

“ Then, hearken. ‘T is the court gossip, your carryings-on with the young nobles.”

“ Gad ! sister, and does the Queen of England stoop to listen to the gossip of her court ? Better sport would it be to set tongues wagging than listening to them wag. Little time have I for aught but study. By your Majesty’s order, the Catholic literature of the realm is stored in my apartments to the ceilings. I have called upon some of the young nobles to assist me in digesting this matter ; but if that be called carrying-on, then, your Highness, I understand not the word.”

“ Your light and frothy behavior, Bess, is not to my taste. Now tell me what you have done to bewitch this young Courteney ? The man follows you like a hound.”

“ Indeed, your Grace,” and my lady was all hurt humility, “ that would seem a proper attitude for

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him, would it not? 'T would not be seemly that he should walk *beside* the queen's sister. With all his lack of training, my lord does ever show a proper respect for them above him."

Mary flushed under the calm gaze.

"And suppose," she cried angrily, "that I should desire to place this new lord beside me, what then?"

"Why, then, your Highness," and my lady raised her brows, "the queen would have a very good-looking young lord beside her, and doubtless his following of the Lady Elizabeth would cease. My Lord Courtenay has long been used to captivity, your Grace; he might not chafe under it as another might."

"How dare you?" cried the queen, stamping her foot in rage. "Would imply that to share my throne would be captivity?"

"Share your throne?" gasped my lady. "Is the queen desirous of sharing her throne? Were that fact known, would her throne have remained empty?"

"You drive me mad!" Mary burst forth. "You ever stand between me and my hopes. At times I think the world is not large enough for you and me."

For a moment the brave color fled from my lady's face.

"'T is ever my misfortune to blur the court

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atmosphere," she sighed. "I pray you, sister, give me leave to travel to Ashbridge. I wish not to incur your displeasure, and," with a soft sigh, "I am very weary."

"Weary? Weary of what?" cried Mary. "Weary of bearing the devotion of all; weary of playing the princess where all hearts crown you queen! If that be weariness, then most gladly would I die of it. Think of the weariness of bearing the burden of a loveless realm! Think of my empty life, crowned with — what? Nothing but a mocking diadem!"

"I pray you cease!" exclaimed my lady, kneeling before her sister, and grasping her hand, "when saner moments come, you will hate me because of these words. 'T is ever so. We love not them who know our weakness. Let me go away. No more loyal subject exists than I, but my place is not here."

"I give you permission," Mary murmured. "The court, at least, is not large enough for you and me. 'T is for you to decide about the world. But I warn you, no one stands between me and my duty as England's queen. 'T will be well to take that knowledge with you, my princess sister, to Ashbridge."

"'T will be my constant companion, your Highness."

Then, rising, my lady passed from the room.

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In the corridor she encountered Courteney. He bent and kissed her hand.

“I am starting upon a journey, good friend,” she quivered, a sad smile flitting over her face.

“A journey, my lady? I trust it is a short one; the Court will miss the sunlight until you return.”

“I desire not to return, Courteney,” my lady whispered; “and they who wish me well, will do best by forgetting me forever.”

Long did young Courteney look at the golden head bent before him, then he said, in tones which reached her heart: “That were impossible, my princess. Better the Tower’s gloom, broken by the light of your face at times, than the queen’s Court darkened by your absence.”

“Speak not so,” sighed my lady; “such thoughts are harmful to us both. Live worthily, and, if I live, I shall remember that you did so, perhaps — a — little — for — me.”

Then she passed on, leaving Courteney gazing after her with a new light upon his face that never departed, even after the queen, enraged at his indifference, sent him back to his old Tower home.

CHAPTER TWENTY

A CAPTIVE PRINCESS

NOW, Nan, it looks to me as if my stay in bed was to be a lengthy one." My lady spoke from the pillows, as she watched her deft little gentlewoman moving about the room. "The weather is so fine, too, and the hunting most excellent. Remember, I am ill, very ill, does the queen send again; and call upon all your lately acquired saints to bear you out in this lie, I command you!"

"My lady!" little Nan blushed rosily; her religion, while not deep, was important, and her royal mistress dealt none too gently with it.

"A rebellion, you say, Nan?" questioned Elizabeth.

"Tis so hinted, your Grace."

"And my sister thinks I would be safer at court? The queen and I disagree. Belike I will take my chances here. Wyatt is a good fighter, when his blood is up; the queen will soon have her hands full, without burdening her sisterly

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mind with me. What is the queen's temper, Nan?"

"Oh, my lady, very bad indeed. They do say that gallows are set up at every gate, and bonfires are kindled all over the kingdom. Heretics burning like chaff, and — and —"

"There, there!" cried my lady, "and her Grace, the good queen, desires me to come up to court and view this illumination and swinging! As God lives, Nan, my soul sickens in real earnest. No need for lies, little one; the Princess Elizabeth is ill, ill with loathing. Do you hear?"

"Oh, what was that?" Little Nan's face blanched, and she ran to the casement; peering forth into the night, she gasped: "Oh, my lady! the courtyard is full of men. They are hammering upon the door. There are hundreds of them."

Elizabeth sprang from the bed. Loathing was not an illness which had weakened her ability for action to any great extent. She pressed against Nan, and listened to the uproar below.

"From the queen, I swear!" she muttered, "and 't is ten of the clock. The indignity is past belief. Is the door of the chamber fastened, Nan?"

"Ye-es, my lady." Poor little Nan's teeth were chattering, but my lady grew calmer as she listened.

A CAPTIVE PRINCESS

“Now listen, Nan, when the messengers knock at the door, for they will knock, and soon, by Gad! you are to answer calmly, and with severe tones, that her Grace Elizabeth is extremely ill and cannot travel.”

“Ye-es, ye-es, my lady!” Nan was the most abject figure of fear one ever saw, and my lady laughed at the sight.

“Begad! the day is lost with such an one as you at the front. On to the bed, Nan; do as I command! List! the messengers have gained an entrance. Hear them striding through the halls! Quick, girl, writhe and twist as you will, for the *moment* you are the Princess of Wales.”

Nan tremblingly mounted the great bed, and in a very true anguish of soul and body sank among the pillows.

A loud knock upon the door panels reduced her to a series of groans, and turned my lady’s laughter to a firm voice.

“Who knocks?”

“A messenger from court. Open, in the name of the queen.”

“Have mercy, sir!” Elizabeth’s tones were calm and respectful. “This is the bedchamber of her Highness the Princess Elizabeth.”

“Tis to her Highness we wish to speak.”

“That is impossible, sir; her Grace is this minute in the throes of great bodily anguish.”

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And, indeed, the figure upon the bed carried out the words.

"To whom do we speak?" cried the voice outside, impatiently.

"To her best friend, sir; one who wishes for her good."

"The queen commands her immediate presence at court. Sick or well, my lady is to journey to London. Her Majesty's litter is in the courtyard."

"Hear you, my lady?" Elizabeth spoke to the figure on the bed. "Her Grace the Queen has sent her own litter for you. Stop your groans," for Nan's terror was beyond control; "sick or well, you are to be carried up to court. What say you?"

Nan was beyond speech, but my lady filled the gap. "She begs your merciful consideration, and if you will permit her but this one night's rest, sick or *dying*, she will accompany you at break of day."

There was a confused hubbub in the hall; then a reluctant permission for a few hours' respite.

The tired messengers repaired to such a repast and shelter as Ashbridge could offer, and my lady and little Nan conferred in whispers as to the next step.

"Not a wink will I sleep," quoth Elizabeth; "I

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must look as ill as possible. If they knew me not, Nan, I vow you should go in my place."

"God forbid!" piously groaned Nan.

"Oh, I know 't is no child's play, little one. 'T will take all the wit I possess to deal with my queenly sister now. She imagines me implicated in this Wyatt uprising. As if I were not too wise for that sort of mischief. My head wobbles upon my shoulders, Nan; never did it seem so uncertain."

Then her mood changed. "Why should I struggle? Whatever fate has in store, that we are hastening on to. My place waits me; here, there, what matters? Sleep, little friend; you played your part nobly. It is only the Princess Elizabeth who need tremble now."

At daybreak the castle was astir, and, supported on either side by a maid, my lady descended the stairs and entered the litter. Ill she looked, indeed; for all her brave spirit she was but a girl, and a life of chance and change was wearing upon her.

This might be the end. Perchance Mary had determined that the world was not large enough for them both. Well, Mary had but to say the word. But *would* that word be all that was necessary? See, as the litter proceeded down the sweet country roads, men, women, and children gathered to watch it pass.

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order, at Hampton Court, a few miles above London.

There, from her window, she gazed down upon the Thames, and hope died within her breast. She thought upon the narrow road so many dear ones had trod before, the end of which lay beyond the Tower gateway.

Who knew so well as she the horrors and cruelties of Mary's reign? Who knew better than she of the jealous hatred the queen felt for her?

No; there was no hope. The merry smile fled from the fair face, and returned not for many a day.

She was at first permitted to retain her own servants and attendants, and except for the harrowing fear that hung over her, life would not have been so hard a thing.

Faithful little Launcelot, now grown to slender boyhood, beguiled many a lonely hour, and pretty Nan brought gossip, as she could glean it, omitting always that which would add to her dear lady's anxiety.

But one day Nan came not, and Launcelot tried to shield his mistress from the knowledge of the true reason.

"Belike, she has gone down to London town," quivered the boy in explanation. "Your Grace knows that one must *seek* news, if one would know

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it at Hampton Court ; and Mistress Nan is a great gossip-hunter."

Elizabeth went up to her little page, and took his trembling hands in hers. "Launcelot the Faithful," she whispered, "I bid you speak quite frankly to me ! No true love seeks refuge behind a lie, and a brave spirit quails not before a truth. Dear boy, why has Mistress Nan gone hence ? "

Right loyally the boy gazed up into his dear mistress' face, and made reply : "Your Grace, by the queen's order, the present staff of servants and attendants is to be changed. Only I am left."

My lady for one pitiful moment bowed her head, then she raised it grandly. "And soon," said she, "you will go. I see it all.

"Alone, into the shadow, must I go ; but, Launcelot, not alone shall I emerge from out it. A goodly company goes daily from our queen's court to a higher one. I pray that I may not dishonor that true and noble throng. 'T is fear that makes cowards of us all, but, God knows, I am no coward. Live worthily, Launcelot, and let the future care for its own."

The boy was weeping bitterly, for full well he knew that his time was short at Hampton Court, but he kept that secret in his gentle heart. While he could, he served her whom he loved very loyally, and then one night he slipped away, by the queen's

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command, leaving only the memory of his boyish service and devotion to cheer my lady's solitude.

She asked no questions of the new servants. Calmly, proudly, she went about her daily tasks. She read much, thought more, and was ever on the watch.

One day, as she was walking in the palace gardens, an officer approached and bowed humbly before her. Even the queen's guards became her adherents, once they fell under her courteous charm.

"My lady," said the man, "mayhap it has not reached the ears of your Highness, but the queen has decided, because of the unsettled condition of the kingdom, that you be this day conveyed by water to the Tower. The barge awaits your ladyship's presence at the stair foot."

For a moment the glorious light turned black, and my lady reeled as she stood. Then, leaning against a tree, she said slowly : "The queen fears for my safety? I am to be taken to the Tower as a — as a precaution?"

"I cannot say, my lady; my orders were simply to convey you there."

"You are alone?"

"Nay, your Grace, there is another; he is now approaching."

Elizabeth saw him coming slowly up the path.

"I pray you, gentlemen," she said, as he joined

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them, “I question not the authority of the queen, but I wish to send her a letter ere I leave this place ; have I your permission so to do ?”

The first officer nodded his head : “Tis a small request, your ladyship ; I see no reason for refusing it. The delay will be slight, and if it be your pleasure, I freely give my consent.”

“Zounds ! ” cried the other, blustering mightily, “I give not my consent, then, in delaying any command of her sacred Majesty.”

My lady’s lip curled. “The request is such a small one, my lord,” she urged, “and it means *much to me.*”

“Tilly-vally, madam,” the man was evidently an ardent advocate of the queen ; “great or small, your request would delay her Majesty’s order, and to that I will never consent.”

My lady’s eyes flashed, but before she could speak, the first officer, a mere boy, made bold to say : “Tis not always, my lord, that you carry out her Majesty’s commands so fully. I heard you telling her Highness of your devotion to her religion ; I wonder now, how it would please our sovereign did I but fill her ears with what occurred at mass this morning ? ”

The man addressed blanched. “I but wrote a note to a friend,” he faltered.

“I have the note, my lord ; the warning it contains will not be needed. Mayhap we can send

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your letter to the queen, instead of the one her Grace Elizabeth desires to write."

The listeners held their breath. Then, "Have you the letter, Merton?" said the officer.

"I have, my lord."

"Will you give it to me, if I consent to her Grace Elizabeth's request?"

The boy took the missive from his breast and passed it to my lady.

"The favor must come through her ladyship's hand," he smiled.

Elizabeth took the missive, and departed to write her own to her sister. When it was finished, she said: "Here are both letters, my lord. I should feel safer did I know that you were more loyal to yourself and your sovereign. But I have fallen upon days when I have no choice in my messengers. I earnestly beseech you to see that my letter reaches her Majesty."

The writer of the warning snatched the two missives, and, followed by the other, went rapidly away.

Then did my lady watch and wait. But no reply came, except the return of the officers, who were ordered to deliver their prisoner at the Tower within a certain time.

"I am ready, my lords," said my lady, when she realized that her letter, vowing allegiance, was ignored; "I have done what I could for the

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Princess of Wales ; it is your duty now to take Elizabeth prisoner to the Tower."

In all secrecy the barge floated down the Thames past London, and so on to the prison, which stood below.

The rain fell heavily, and it was a dreary journey.

"See," said my lady once, "nature weeps. She shows no difference in her sorrow over the great or small ; methinks she is the only one who weeps for me this day, and yet God wots my need is great."

"Your ladyship wrongs many in saying that. Did the people know who floats down the river this day, the scene would not be so peaceful an one." The man who spoke bowed his head as he ended, for the pain-filled face opposite unnerved him.

"And do the people not know ?" questioned my lady.

"No, your Grace. 'T is a great feast day, and the people willy-nilly are crowding the churches."

"Does the queen fear so greatly?" sighed Elizabeth ; "even from my sore heart I needs must pity her." Then, after a pause, "I hear the prisons are full to overflowing, owing to the recent uprising. Do you know in what part of the Tower I am to be lodged? Some of the wardens are not strange to me."

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Perhaps even then my lady hoped that she was to be taken to the retreat reserved for kings and queens in an hour of danger. She was young, and hope died hard in her brave heart.

“I cannot tell your ladyship,” replied the man, and his head sank lower.

But Elizabeth had not long to wait in suspense. The rowers knew their instructions well. Up to a grim gateway they pulled, and then rested on their oars.

My lady rose to her feet, and with flashing eye demanded : “‘ Why halt you here ? This is the Traitors’ Gate ! ’ ”

No man spoke.

“‘ I am no traitor. And as God hears me, I will not land here ! ’ ”

Again that ominous silence, while the rain dripped pitifully upon the slim girl standing in the barge, awaiting with bated breath the outcome.

Perhaps, in that awful moment, she thought of her fair young mother, whose feet had trod the same painful road. Perchance the horror, more recent, of little Jane’s sad fate, overwhelmed her, for after a pause she repeated, but with a broken voice : “ I — will — not — land — here ; I am no traitor ! ”

Then said one of the noblemen in the stern : “ My lady, when the queen commands, not even the Princess Elizabeth has a choice.”

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The girlish face quivered.

"Permit me," said the same kindly voice, "to wrap my coat about you; too heavily falls the rain upon your ladyship." He arose and profered the warm garment.

Elizabeth cast it aside: "Need I fear so small a thing as nature's tears when the queen's wrath so heavily has fallen upon me?" she sighed. "Nay, I will do my part. Behold!"

The great gates had swung back, and my lady stepped proudly and alone from the barge to the slimy landing. "'Here lands as true and faithful a subject as ever landed a prisoner at these stairs. Before Thee, O God, I speak it, having now no friends but Thee alone.'"

All the pride and arrogance were gone from the wan face. The spirit of the grim Tower had enveloped her; its merciful patience was not yet given. The shadow and desolation were all that she felt, and her courage died as she raised her eyes toward the God she had so little needed in her strong young girlhood.

"Do you remember," she said to him who walked nearest her, "the old legend of this gateway?"

"No, my lady."

"Tis said that when the arch was first builded, it fell, then was rebuilt. For a year it stood, then fell again. Now, upon the night of the

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second fall, there was a witness, a good and gentle priest; and he did say after that as the arch fell he beheld an Archbishop, with upraised cross, gazing upon the grim walls that were round about the Tower.

“‘Why build ye these?’ and as he spoke the walls fell, as if beneath a mighty weight. Then did the priest see a pale attendant beside the Archbishop, and of him he asked: ‘Who, then, is the Archbishop?’

“‘Saint Thomas the Martyr, by birth a citizen, who resents these works.’”

“‘T is but a legend,’ sighed my lady, “and yet, methinks, he knew that did this gateway rise, ‘t would be the entrance for martyrs, not traitors, and so he spoke against it. Man’s cruelty was greater than the angel’s mercy, so the archway was again rebuilt; and through it I pass to-day, as hundreds have before me; no traitor, but a martyr because of an unwise monarch.”

Those who listened bowed before the pale, proud girl.

Suddenly the inner gateway opened, and rows of keepers and wardens lined the way.

“What means this?” asked my lady.

“‘T is the usual way of receiving prisoners, your Highness,” came the reply.

“‘T is a foolish custom,” smiled Elizabeth, and oh, the pathos of the smile!

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“Tis overmuch pomp for such as I. Pray dispense with it. Why should these honest fellows stand in the cruel storm to see the passage of so poor a prisoner as the queen’s deserted sister?”

Then did those servants of the queen fall upon their knees before my lady. Many of them remembered her goodness when, as the great princess, she had visited the Tower upon errands of mercy.

“God bless your Grace!” they cried, and down more than one manly face the sympathizing tears rolled.

Elizabeth smiled gently upon them. No more reverently was Mary then kneeling before her altar than were these her servants kneeling before her girlish prisoner.

“Tis the greatest homage of my life,” Elizabeth whispered; “when I was strong, then did I take such acts as my just due, but now—” A sob choked her, and she passed on.

Within that gateway the prisons arose, solemn and gray. No face peered from any window, for, by the queen’s orders, all confined in view of the landing-place of Elizabeth were removed. There must not be too much sympathy shown the forlorn girl. It might cheer an hour otherwise made bitter by jealousy and hatred.

For a few steps my lady walked in stately

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fashion ahead of her attendants, then, overcome by a wave of despair, she sat down upon the stone curb, and, gazing pitifully up into the compassionate faces surrounding her, said : “Gentlemen, I can go no further.”

“I pray your Grace to rise and be brave,” said one of the guards ; “your Highness makes a hard duty most unbearable by thus forcing us against our wills.”

Elizabeth staggered to her feet at that, ever mindful, even in the terrible hour, of others.

She turned her eyes to the gateway which was closed against her and liberty. And in that look was the farewell yearning of a crushed spirit.

“Lead on,” she murmured ; “I am ready now.”

Once within her prison-room, my lady begged to be alone ; and when the request was granted she bowed her head in her hands and groaned in agony.

Would the courage which had come to little Jane come to her?

She recalled the words of her who had once spoken from the darkness upon that bitter night so long ago : “Never was your mother so truly a queen as when she died. Glad was she to go to a brighter world than this. She forgave all who had injured her.” The sentences rang through the gloom and were repeated over and over again in my lady’s heart.

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Was she less than her mother ?

The world had been none too bright a place for poor Anne Boleyn's child ; why should she be sorry to leave it ? Was there not for her, as for all who had gone forth from this grim place, a home safe from fear and sorrow ?

" She forgave all who had injured her." That was the answer to the mystery. If she, the Princess Elizabeth, could forgive all who had injured her, then, perchance, would God send His angel of love and peace to help her bear the weight of the sad days until — until she too went out to safety.

The fair head bent lower. In that dark place the faces of all who had injured her seemed to rise and shine forth. Those who were nearest and dearest to her were among them, and the sight wrung her heart and made her moan.

Could she forgive them ? Yes ; one by one she saw them disappear ; at last only Mary's stern face remained in her memory. It was hard to forgive the queen ! When had Elizabeth been aught but loving and loyal to her sister, even in the old empty days ?

Why did Mary hate her and wish to destroy her ?

Then other recollections flooded in, — Mary's sick, unloved childhood ; her desolate soul-hunger and cruel injustices. Who had taught Mary to be merciful ?

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“I can forgive her,” sobbed my lady, as she fell upon her knees; “I can forgive even the queen.”

“Dear lady!” A soft whisper thrilled through the ghostly place.

Unnerved, Elizabeth rose to her feet, and glanced wildly around.

Had God’s angel come?

The light from a high window fell aslant across the room, and in its shimmer stood a little child, with his baby fingers full of flowers.

With outstretched hands, my lady staggered forward.

Oh! if she could but stay the vision!

The tender face smiled up at her as she advanced: “I have brought you some flowers, poor lady,” lisped the boy; “I am so sorry for you.”

“Who — what — are you?” hoarsely questioned Elizabeth.

“My father is one of the keepers; he said that I might come to bring — to bring you these.”

The flowers were held forth.

Then, down at the feet of that small angel of mercy knelt the Princess Elizabeth. She clasped in her arms the small form so warm and human, and the tears flowed down her pale face, washing away all hardness and reproach as they fell.

“If the Tower holds so fair and lovely a thing as you, dear child,” she said, “then, indeed, can I hope for peace.”

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She kissed the dimpled hands as she took the flowers, and tried to smile into the wondering eyes.

"Are you very sad, poor lady?"

"I was, little lad, but you have made me happier."

"Then will I come every day," said the loyal boy, "and I will bring you flowers, and tell you all the pretty things the others say."

"What others, dear one?" My lady was still holding the tiny form close to her bursting heart.

"Oh! all the others whom the queen sends here." The boy put his lips close to my lady's ear. "I do not love the queen," he breathed, "for all whom she sends here are sad. But they told me of you, and how good you are, and Lord Courteney bade me love you tenderly."

"Lord Courteney!" gasped my lady.

"Aye. A brave, kind gentleman is Lord Courteney," the little voice went on. "He tells me wondrous tales, and he bade me say that the Tower was no longer dark, now that you had come."

"He said that?" soft tears were again falling on the boy's curls.

"Aye, dear lady, but I know not what he means. 'T was not always dark in the Tower even before you came; but those were his words."

"Tell my Lord Courteney," Elizabeth spoke

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low, " tell my lord that a kindly word has likewise brought light to me. And bid him have a brave spirit for — for my sake."

" I must go, lady," said the boy, " and I will bear your message."



Harriet Rosemarie Richards.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE TOWER MESSENGER

AS the long, anxious days went by, my lady felt the atmosphere of the Tower settling down upon her, as it seemed to do upon all other unfortunates within its walls.

Strange as it would once have seemed to her, she did not pace her room with wild strides and rail against a cruel fate.

A calmness possessed her, a patient fortitude. She grew interested in small things, read much, and studied deeply.

She listened as eagerly for the step of the keeper's little son as once she had listened for any gallant courtier who was bent upon a visit of homage to her shrine.

No flowers of the kingdom had ever been sweeter than the ones which grew in the Tower gardens, and were brought to her by the humblest of her adorers.

At times the hours hung like lead upon her aching heart, but by degrees she found the solace that little Jane had found, and while my lady

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feared for the future, she did not sink utterly under the present.

Sometimes a message from Courteney, brought by the little lad, made her smile her slow, rare smile ; and with a flash of her old-time wit she would send one in reply to him, that caused him to forget what a lonely place a prison-house was.

“I bid you tell no other but my Lord Courteney,” Elizabeth would warn the merry little messenger ; “these be court secrets, and of mighty import.”

The boy felt the honor, and strutted with delight.

He gathered every item he thought would interest my lady, and prattled his news into her loving ears.

“Dear princess,” he quivered one day, “one of the old lions is dead. He was such an old grandfather lion, and I loved him best of all. He was so old that he had gotten tired of being fierce ; he was as gentle as a kitten, and used to blink at me when I fed him, in the kindest way.” The child’s eyes were tear-dimmed. “And they do say,” the quivering voice went on, “that something evil will now happen to one of the Tudors ; something always happens to them when a lion dies. I hope,” — with a lowering of the voice, — “I hope it will happen to the queen ! ”

“Say not so ! ” cried my lady, aghast at the

THE TOWER MESSENGER

boy's evident earnestness ; then her pallor deepened. Prison walls had shaken her true nerves. *She* was a Tudor ; might not the impending evil come to her ?

"I have no message for Lord Courtenay to-day !" she breathed ; "I desire to be alone."

The little messenger's time of glory was destined to be of short length, however. Scurrying through the corridors one day, with his hands full of flowers, he was addressed by a guard.

"Whither so fast, my boy ? "

"I go to visit the Lady Elizabeth."

"Where have you been ? "

"I just came from my Lord Courtenay's apartments. I divide my flowers between my lord and her Grace Elizabeth."

The child did not intend that this curious guard should learn too much, so he grew cautious and full of mischief.

"Belike my lord has sent a message to her Grace," said the man ; "Lord Courtenay knew her ladyship at court."

"Belike he did," laughed the boy, mimicking the guard's tones.

"What was the message ? "

"I tell no secrets." Again the merry laugh, as the sturdy legs ran on.

Now, while this seemed a trivial matter, it looked most ominous to the guard. Lord Courtenay was suspected of being in sympathy with the

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Wyatt rebellion, and while nothing could be proved, the keepers of the Tower knew that my Lady Elizabeth had been suspected of sympathy with every rebellion since she was able to assert her will against others. So now the young officer, who was ambitious to win favor from a monarch whose name made him tremble, repeated the conversation he had had with the keeper's child to others in authority, and the little lad was brought before the officers of the Tower to answer some very serious questions.

He came quite fearlessly, and innocently eyed the grave faces peering into his.

“ You visit Lord Courtenay ? ” asked one.

“ I do, sire.”

“ And my Lady Elizabeth also ? ”

“ Yes, sire.”

“ Why do you go ? ”

“ Because I love them, and I do make them very happy.”

The stern face relaxed.

“ They give you messages ? ”

“ They do, sire. Her Grace Elizabeth calls me ‘ Cupid,’ but my Lord Courtenay does call me ‘ Mercury.’ I know not what they mean.”

“ My lady can crack a jest, then ? ” mused the officer ; “ hers is a brave spirit, and dies not easily. And now, my boy,” this aloud, “ do you recall any messages her Grace gave you ? ”

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"Oh, many, sire." The child smiled brightly.

"Can you repeat them?"

"I can, sire, but they are for my Lord Courtenay's ears alone. I love my lady too well to disobey her."

A frown settled upon the officer's face. "I bid you repeat these messages at once!" he commanded.

A grieved, surprised expression came to the small upturned face.

"Nay, sire, that I cannot do. I have promised."

"For less offence many have died," the officer glared at the boy.

"I would rather die, sire, than to make sad the Lady Elizabeth."

Did death mean but a word to that little child, or did life within the Tower rob it of its terrors for young and old?

Seeing no relenting on the boy's face, the officers conferred together, and then one of them in a stern voice commanded: "I forbid you speaking or going near the Lady Elizabeth again. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sire." A depth of sorrow thrilled through the childish voice.

Then, with a keen knowledge of human nature, another added: "If you disobey, her Grace will suffer for your folly. 'Tis upon her the punishment will fall."

The boy winced.

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And so it was that my lady waited in her Tower room for the faithful little feet that came not. And my Lord Courteney again realized how dark his life could be, now that he knew not how his lady fared. But one day the little messenger, distracted with love and remorse, dared even the powers of the Tower, and hid behind a clump of bushes in the garden where my lady, by the goodness of a merciful keeper, was permitted to take a daily stroll.

Made keen by fear of what might befall *her*, the boy had prepared a mode of action; but would her Grace help him, or ruin them both? Little did he know of his lady when he so questioned. She was equal to any emergency.

From his leafy bower he saw her coming down the sunlit path. Her golden head was bowed, and her beautiful white hands clasped before her. Very sad and pale she looked, and, as she walked, she whispered some Latin words over and over again. Once she passed the hiding-place, and he, who crouched behind the bushes dared not speak. Then, she retraced her steps, and, as she drew near, a sentence fell upon her ear,—

“Dear lady, I am here, but do not look.”

The Latin words faltered on the lips of my lady for one fleeting moment, then they flowed on quite evenly, and the boy in the bushes breathed freely.

THE TOWER MESSENGER

“They bade me come not near you; but I love you, and I would bring you the flowers, only I dare not!”

“How sweet the fragrance is!” Elizabeth bent over the budding bush, and spoke softly: “I understand, little one. May God bless you to your life’s end!”

She arose. The Latin verse flowed on, but out of Elizabeth Tudor’s life the last ray of sunlight was gone.

Three long months passed while my lady bided in the Tower,—months of anxiety, loneliness and pain. Her spirit was broken, but not killed; and the pride of her race upheld her, though she knew it not.

Then one day martial music flooded the courtyard and made its way to the room where she sat apart. She arose, and a whiter tinge came to her pale, thin face. She heard steps advancing, the tramp of many feet; and Elizabeth knew they were coming for her! She flinched not, now that the hour had arrived. The worst had passed long ago, when hope and liberty had died.

The bars flew back, and in strode Sir Thomas Beddingfield, resplendent in the queen’s uniform, and behind him, quite filling the passage, were several hundred men at least.

“They have come to read me my death-war-

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rant," thought my lady, and she grew more rigid as she stood.

"I have come, by order of the queen, to remove you from the Tower," announced Sir Thomas.

"And to what safer quarter does her Majesty assign me?" Elizabeth asked.

"That I cannot tell, your Grace."

Sir Thomas knew bravery when he saw it, and that slim, unflinching girl touched his heart.

"Has the scaffold of Lady Dudley been removed?" What this question meant to Elizabeth who can tell?

"It has, my lady."

"May I see Lord Chandos ere I depart?" My lady knew the constable of the Tower was her friend; perhaps he would relieve her suspense.

The constable was summoned, and returned at once with the messenger.

"Your Grace need have no fear," he smiled; "her Majesty the Queen has ordered that your ladyship be transferred to Woodstock. 'Tis a more fitting place, I warrant, than this."

"Under whose care am I placed?"

A new fear entered my lady's heart,—fear of secret doings.

"Mine, your Grace." Sir Thomas bent his head.

"I distrust the queen's wisdom in making this change," sighed Elizabeth. "Here I am a state

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prisoner, and the eye of the public is upon me. At Woodstock—who knows?"

"Your Grace need have no fear of hidden foe," Sir Thomas hastened to assure her. "On my word, I believe her Majesty, in showing this leniency, means but kindness toward you."

The slow smile flitted over my lady's weary face.

So, attended by the queen's escort, Elizabeth Tudor left the Tower and began her journey to her new prison.

The free air and sunlight brought the color back to her wan cheeks, and the old valiant spirit rose as the prison gates clashed after her. Outside those terrible walls there was a vision of hope. She knew that loyal hearts beat with hers all over the blood-stained kingdom. Mary's reign of horror had stilled, but not killed the spirit of the Reformation. Well my lady knew that, while her sister was feared, *she* was loved, and the thought came to her on the wings of the fresh breeze.

"Her gracious Majesty is biding at Richmond," Sir Thomas announced when the journey was begun.

"Your lordship seems to know more than when I questioned you as to my destination," smiled Elizabeth.

"There is a time for the giving of information," Beddingfield replied; "since Lord Chandos has

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told you where you are to go, I may now add that, on the way there, your ladyship is to stop at Richmond."

"To see the queen?" The question rushed to my lady's lips.

"That is as it may be. A surprise awaits your Grace."

A surprise, indeed! When Richmond was reached, surrounded by soldiers and guards, my lady, while she knew herself a prisoner, felt the sweetness of power. For, under the fear of the queen, the guard did their duty openly, but by slight tones and glances her Grace Elizabeth was made to understand that she stood high in popular favor. The thought brought strength to her, and a semblance of her old pride and arrogance returned. In the face of that double-natured populace, she dared much.

The surprise came in the form of a proposition of marriage.

The queen had arranged it beforehand. There was the Duke of Savoy quite ready to take the troublesome Princess of Wales to his dominions in Switzerland and France.

Mary reasoned it out in her anxious brain that Elizabeth would be overjoyed at this easy mode of escape, and she, the overwrought and weary queen, would be well rid of a foe she dared not kill, yet feared to see live.

THE TOWER MESSENGER

But my lady scouted the idea of marrying a mere duke. She, the proud princess of the House of Tudor!

"As God hears me!" she exclaimed, with a toss of her sunny curls, "I would rather be a captive in my own land than queen of any petty kingdom beyond the Rhone! Go tell her Majesty that I will not wed this Duke of Savoy."

How soon my lady had forgotten her Tower days! But the sun was now shining, and the guard, while they mouthed the queen's messages, did mightily smile on the radiant Princess of Wales.

When Mary received her sister's haughty reply, she ordered the company on to Woodstock, and lighted more fires, and erected more scaffolds to ease herself of the indignation she felt toward the undaunted maid.

Elizabeth travelled the distance between Richmond and Woodstock on horseback. It took several days, and after the long confinement in prison my lady was greatly wearied by the exertion.

As she passed through the villages, the church bells were rung, and the simple folk came to meet her, bearing in their hands gifts, the best that they could afford, to lighten the heart of this dear princess who was suffering, as they themselves were suffering, under the heavy hand of the cruel queen.

The July sun flashed down upon the cavalcade

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as it rested by the wayside; and could Mary have seen the devotion paid her sister on that weary journey, her empty heart would have grown heavier as she sat upon her throne.

Now, while Woodstock was not as gloomy a prison-house as the Tower, it was none the less a prison. My lady felt that those who surrounded her pitied her forlorn state, but she realized that they feared their queen with a fear born of her reputation of frenzied cruelty. And in spite of all her innate courage, Elizabeth began to share this terror.

Tales of horror floated more easily to Woodstock than they did to the Tower. There they often were strangled at the gate; now they found a resting-place in the hearts which dwelt in the prison-castle.

Might not the queen find a secret way of getting rid of her sister, since she for some reason dreaded to do so publicly?

A fear grew in the household when a new attendant appeared, and my lady relished not her meals because of her distrust.

With partial freedom, time was found for outside worries to creep in.

During that summer Elizabeth often wondered if it would not have been better had stone walls shut out sight and sound, for now she saw afar that for which her free soul hungered.

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Her jailers grew more merciful as they learned to know her better. Her bravery and courage surprised them, and her wit often cheered an hour none too gay for them.

One day, from her turret chamber, she saw a milkmaid on a near-by hill. The girl was trilling a wild, sweet song, with her fresh rosy face turned toward the sky.

My lady looked, and the tears gathered in her eyes; then, leaning against the casement, she sobbed aloud for pure self-pity.

“Is yon poor girl the only happy girl in my sister’s kingdom?” she sighed. “Oh, the pity of it all! To think that the power to make a nation sing for joy is turned to such bitterness!”

The milkmaid on her hill sang on, unheeding; while Elizabeth Tudor wept in her lonely exile.

But not forever was my lady to fret and languish.

Shortly other rumors came, to the effect that the queen was at last to marry. Then came confirmation, when Philip of Spain landed upon English soil, and strutted before the amazed eyes of the nobility and commoners.

Mary quite forgot her dignity, and went two-thirds of the way to meet her proud Spanish cousin; and if rumor spoke true, this cavalier was none too well pleased when he beheld his future wife. A kingdom even was not too tempting

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a dowry, he thought; but he married her, and indifferently settled down, for the time being, on alien soil.

Poor Queen Mary took a long breath. One of her aims was accomplished. Now that she was married, she need not fear Elizabeth as a matrimonial rival, so she grew generous and sent to Woodstock a command that my lady should come at Christmas and share the court revels.

Philip must not think her hard and unjust. Poor, misguided Mary! Better had she left her sister then to the solitude of her prison castle.

But my lady, all agog at the change and excitement, donned her most gorgeous gown, and, flushed and beautiful, rode up to court and burst upon the vision of Philip of Spain like an apparition from another world.

When Elizabeth entered the great hall, which was lighted by a thousand lamps, every eye turned upon her. At the upper end of the room sat the queen, with her new husband beside her. As Elizabeth came toward them, Mary realized, with a shock, that she had made the blunder of her life in summoning her sister there.

Philip's dull eyes flashed with the first gleam of interest that they had shown since he left Spain. Quite forgetting his bride, he showered compliments and welcomes on this delightful new sister-in-law.

THE TOWER MESSENGER

And my lady tossed her curls, and took her place between Mary and him, with many a merry jest and witty speech.

It was so easy for her to be happy. So possible for her to forget her misery, or to appear to,—which, after all, is better.

That Christmas visit was the opening wedge.

The court soon became a dull place to Philip if my lady tarried long at Woodstock,—where her sister sent her as often as she dared.

By degrees, the true state of affairs was made known to the Spanish husband, and his heart, cold and indifferent enough to most, was touched for my lady. He knew his power over his unlovely wife, and he used it to win a reconciliation between the queen and the princess.

He found Mary alone in the library one day, and began the plea for Elizabeth, upon the ground that it ill became England's queen to appear afraid of her young sister.

“Afraid?” said Mary. “Pray, my lord, what mean you by that?”

“What other reason have you, then, for banishing this beautiful girl, who should, by all rights of nature, be your care and delight?”

“She defies my authority,” the queen stammered; “she has been accused of intrigue. I will not have her released until she acknowledges her wrong and promises better things.”

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Philip smiled grimly. "Why not send your ministers to my lady Elizabeth, with promise of release if she will do as you say?" he questioned.

Mary walked stiffly over to her husband and put a trembling hand upon his arm. "Can I not have *you* to myself?" she whispered.

A frown grew upon Philip's proud brow, and he restlessly drew away. "I see not how this touches the case of your sister," he said.

Mary's dull face turned crimson.

But this conversation led to her hoping to win her husband's regard by acceding to his desire.

Down to Woodstock went the queen's ministers and made known to my lady that all would be forgiven if she acknowledged her wrongdoing, thus proving her Majesty in the right, and asking favor for the future. But Elizabeth imagined which course her fate was taking, and she flouted the idea of acknowledging a wrong she had never committed.

"I prefer imprisonment for a truth," she said loftily, "to freedom as a traitor."

And so Mary was left to face a new difficulty, and my lady waited, with a sigh of relief, as she did so, for was there not another friend at court? Strange as it might seem, a prince of Spain had come to the rescue of Elizabeth Tudor.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

A TIRED QUEEN

THE May air, soft and balmy, floated into her Majesty's bedchamber ; but pain had entered before it, and, with the suffering, poor Mary's royalty had disappeared, leaving her merely a lonely, tired woman.

She sighed, plucked at the rich lace of her gown, and sighed again. She had commanded that she be left alone, but the stillness of the room oppressed her, yet upon whom could she call for solace and companionship ? What had her queen-dom brought her ?

There were just two persons in the world whom she desired to have with her at that moment. One was her husband ; and he ?— Well, Philip desired to be elsewhere.

Mary, in comparative health, was little to his lordly taste, but Mary sick, and robbed of the dignity of state, was unbearable to this Spanish cavalier.

Hiding her pain and disappointment, the queen did not upbraid her ungallant mate ; she merely

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suffered a little more, and sent for Elizabeth, the other one she longed for.

But would Elizabeth come? That was the question that racked her Majesty, as she lay upon the pillows. How helpless she felt, and how keenly Elizabeth had detected the situation!

There was no fear or quailing in my lady now. Her answers came back to court defiant and unyielding.

What a fine position the queen would be in, if the proud Princess of Wales would kneel, confess that she had wronged her sister, and beg for mercy. Then would Philip see how gracious his wife would be. She would forgive as the saints forgive, and raise the humble princess to a lofty place. But the princess would not kneel. Her proud head was held higher, and Woodstock was greatly to be preferred to the queen's palaces, unless my lady could enter court upon her own terms.

It was the queen who must kneel. And, oh, the bitterness of the thought! Mary, lying upon her bed, knew that if she wished to gain her husband's approval by reinstating Elizabeth, she must acknowledge *herself* in the wrong, and bring her sister to London, to the accompaniment of a nation's cheer of joy.

Poor Mary! her queendom was only what her life had been before,—an empty, mocking answer

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to all her heart-hunger. She had lighted England by heretic bonfires, but those of her own creed shuddered at her deeds.

Those who had stood in her way of power had swung aloft from the gallows' tree, or had bent their heads to the axe's stroke; but what had it availed? Nothing!

There was one who still stood undaunted,—one about whom a crushed kingdom clung in silent longing; one who would never bow her head, or feed a martyr fire, or perish by prison rule or axe's stroke. That one was my lady.

The queen knew it at last, and groaned as she acknowledged the fact.

Her pride and arrogance were gone. She had sent for her sister. She had sent no terms; she only entreated her to come.

Perhaps, if Elizabeth *chose* to come—oh, the bitterness of the thought!—*she* might find a way out of the difficulty; if the queen left the matter in *her* hands, it would be arranged.

Mary recalled memories of the old days. It was Elizabeth's nature to be hard and unyielding where her will was opposed; but how gracious and winning she could be to them who depended upon her!

And Queen Mary, suffering and alone, did depend upon her,—depended upon her for all that life, perchance, held in reserve.

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The queen had capitulated, but would my lady come? Mary raised her crucifix to her lips, and breathed a prayer.

As if in answer, on the evening air came the tramp of horses' feet and the murmur of many voices. Torches flashed in the courtyard below and cast weird shadows upon the walls.

Had they brought the prisoner from Woodstock, or only a scornful reply that her Grace Elizabeth preferred captivity to the queen's mode of release?

In her anxiety and suspense, Mary forgot her pain and strained her eyes toward the entrance.

Swinging lamps, flaring unsteadily, made the gloom of the bedchamber quiver and vibrate.

Hark! the steps drew near. Then a voice she knew so well fell upon the queen's ears. "If it is to her Majesty's bedchamber I am summoned, I pray you, let me enter alone."

The draperies parted, and my lady came into the room.

Pale she was from her long ride, and the white plume of her riding hat encircled her face like a halo. Her eyes shone like stars, and there was a smile, a faint, questioning smile, upon the girlish lips.

Once within the room, she paused. "Is your Majesty ill?" she faltered.

"Not so ill, Bess, as weary. I oftentimes wonder

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if any one before has known such weariness as I know? Weariness of body, mind, and soul."

My lady hesitated no longer; she ran lightly across the floor and knelt beside the bed. Then, reverently, she took the queen's feverish fingers in her own cool ones, and carried them to her lips.

The act caused Mary to turn away her eyes.
"Oh, if I only knew!" she murmured.

"Knew what, your Highness?"

"Nay, Bess, do not mock me. In your heart you know that it is not to the queen you are kneeling, but to a poor, broken woman, deserted by all, and lost upon the way."

"Nay, sister," and there was a wondrous tenderness in my lady's tone. "When I did mount the steps to the Tower through the Traitors' Gate, I knew it was by your command. Yet even then I vowed myself a loyal subject to your Majesty; how much more do I now, kneeling by your bed, vow upon your hand allegiance and devotion?"

"I cannot trust!" The words floated out upon the night, and were, perhaps, the most pitiful acknowledgment of the queen's failure.

"When have I proved myself disloyal to you?" asked my lady, raising her fair, girlish face to the dark, pain-filled one. "Before his death, Wyatt did confess I had naught to do with his uprising. I have ever been the tool that rebels have sought

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to use ; but through all accusation when has anything been proved against me ? ”

“ In truth, I know not.” The queen spoke slowly, and the fingers tightened about her sister’s.

“ When I was but a child,” my lady went on, “ I pleaded your cause before our father, and did pity your forlorn state. I loved your mother ; she was a noble queen ; and I long to be a true sister to Katherine of Arragon’s neglected child.”

A quiver passed over the queen, but the thin lips shut in a harder line.

“ When you were proclaimed queen, who met you upon the way most joyously ? And God knows I had it in my power to raise discord then, did I so desire. Did ever carping tongues accuse me then ? I ask my queen to answer.”

“ They did not.”

“ Then look to your heart, my sister. Are you not shutting from your life the one who might share your burdens and ease your hours of pain ? Are you not causing suffering to the one who might lighten yours ? ”

“ God knows ! ” groaned the queen.

“ I cannot say that I have sinned against your Majesty when I have not; were I so to perjure myself, could your Grace trust my later protestations ? ” Elizabeth continued.

A TIRED QUEEN

“But to acknowledge myself wrong?” moaned Mary.

“Would be but to prove your Highness human,” replied my lady.

“But Philip?”

“My brother-in-law could but love more one who, like himself, sometimes errs.”

“You do mightily move me, Bess, but if I dare too much I may lose all. Philip holds it over me, do I not do so and so, he will sail away and I may not set eyes upon his face again.”

“Gad! with such roving tendencies, the queen must anchor her lord securely. I pray you, accept my aid in finding a way to keep this ungallant prince at home!” The lighter tone aroused the queen’s jealousy.

“Aye, the sight of your countenance at court, Elizabeth, may anchor my lord, but in the wrong harbor.”

“Your Highness does injustice to us all three in that speech.”

“God knows!” Again the weary unbelief in all things earthly.

There was a long pause while the sisters thought apart; then the queen said, as she took a valuable ring from her finger:

“By this symbol, Bess, I wish you to know that I am going to try to trust you. Tarry yet a little at Woodstock, then shall you be free to go to

TOWER OR THRONE

Hatfield and resume as much of your old life as you desire."

" You need me not at court, then, your Grace?"

" No!" The depth of distrust in Mary's nature was all conveyed in that little word. " Nay. Live your own life, Bess. The confines of England's court are too narrow for us both. I wish to do well; 't is only by separation I can promise to do so." She placed the ring upon my lady's finger.

" I wonder," and the deep voice sank, " if any queen of England longed greatly to remain the queen? Life is a desperate struggle at the best. Bess, I shall be glad to rest, and the thought that wearies me most is, that my people too will rejoice mightily. I have made my mother's name more unloved, and I have made my own hateful. I have nothing! nothing!"

My lady pressed her face to the thin hand, but she could find no honest words with which to comfort this heartsick soul.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

SHE COMES INTO HER OWN AT LAST

LATIN and Greek are very well, my lady," — 't was Roger Ascham who spoke, and he smiled indulgently upon his royal pupil, — "and your Grace is a most excellent scholar ; but a woman's sphere is not confined to books, and 't is time that a suitable marriage should arouse your ladyship's interest."

Elizabeth laughed a low, amused laugh.

Mary had been true to her word. Freedom had been granted, and Hatfield once more sheltered my lady. Roger Ascham, and others of the old retinue, again did homage at her shrine, and she was joyously happy.

"I pray you, good Roger," she exclaimed, when once her laugh was ended, "why should marriage arouse my interest? As God hears me, marriage, as it comes to our house, is a thing to arouse my alarm, instead of interest. Think upon my father, kind friend. Surely his Majesty tested the holy state in all its phases, yet the memory of his experiences chills, not heats my blood."

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The old man shook his head, and smiled, in spite of himself, as he glanced into my lady's merry eyes.

"And the queen, my sister," she went on, "what has marriage done for her, good friend? Does her lord wish for a bloody war to serve his own ends, what does he do? 'Fight,' says he, 'or by my Spanish honor, I will leave you,' so the queen bids her army fight, though her own heart breaks as she does so. To think of Queen Mary becoming such a slavey, and all through marriage!"

"But your Grace could marry happily," Roger urged; "'t is her Majesty's desire that you should do so."

"Misery hates bitterly to bide alone," my lady mused. "Nay, good friend, 't is not wise to take many into your confidence; but to you, my faithful guide, I will reveal my heart's secret."

The two were seated beneath the trees of the palace park; and, as she spoke, my lady arose and stood before her tutor, with an expression of mingled mirth and seriousness upon her fair face.

"While I may flit from one love-flower to another,—since I am a woman, and so need honey,—yet, as God above hears, there is but one whom I would wed!"

The tutor's fine old face quivered with excitement.



Evert Nolde.



SHE COMES INTO HER OWN

“And he, my lady, pray describe this greatly honored one, that I may read your riddle.”

My lady stretched forth her strong young arms, and her eyes were full of love.

“‘T is my father’s people I would wed, good Roger. At times, when such moments as these seize my soul, I look beyond my tired sister on her throne, and I see my bridegroom waiting—for me. All the agony and disappointment he has known shines through his faithful eyes. To me he looks for redress and honor. To me he looks for freedom and sympathy, and I, who have suffered and learned, cry out that I will give all that he desires in that time when, over the wrecks and sorrows, we clasp hands, and pledge our troth.” Elizabeth’s voice rose as she went on, and a dry sob choked her.

“My lady!” cautioned the tutor, “this be treason, though none hear it but I, who am most faithful.”

“Nay, Roger, not treason. No traitor am I. Two visions have ever loomed before me, and through sunshine and shadow I have never lost sight of them. The Tower and the Throne! At times the gloom of the one does blot out the glory of the other, but there are moments like these, when I have seen the gray shadow crumble and fade away, while my throne has dazzled me with its splendor. At such periods,

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Roger, I see my Love standing with outstretched arms, and, should the vision ever become a reality, I, Elizabeth Tudor, will know no other bridegroom than the people!"

The young voice thrilled with emotion, but the old man kept silent.

"I yearn to set wide the prison gates, and let free many noble souls. I yearn to bring wisdom and song to a land too long used to ignorance and fear. I long to make my Love smile and shout for joy. Is this a mean desire, good friend, or has your teaching taught Elizabeth Tudor to aspire to the best?"

"As God is my witness, my lady, I believe, did destiny call you to the throne, not unworthily would you rule."

"See!" said Elizabeth, the look of the seer giving place to the amusement and joy of youth, "here comes Launcelot. As nimble as ever, if he brings a message to me. Ho, Faithful One, what news do you bear?"

The young man, flushed and excited, doffed his cap and bowed low before Elizabeth. "My lady," he gasped, "while I was riding toward the town, I met some travellers from the court. In great haste were they, and tarried not for a moment, but I feared for your ladyship, and, turning, did take a cut the lords knew not, and here am I to warn your Grace, and —"

SHE COMES INTO HER OWN

“Here are the lords!” Elizabeth broke in, as round the curving road she saw the brilliant company advancing. “I know not which vision is clearer now, good Roger, the Tower or the Throne!”

My lady’s face grew calm; but Roger, ever on the alert, trembled as he took place beside Launcelot, and waited.

On came the nobles, and who could tell from their grave faces what manner of message they bore? Travel-stained were they, for they had neither rested nor tarried since they left London town.

“My lords!” cried my lady, “I bid you welcome!”

They were bending now before her. Stern up-holders of the state were they, but before that slim, pale girl their voices choked, and tears dimmed their eyes.

“God save our queen, Elizabeth,” said one, “and grant her a long and happy reign!”

Then did they who listened know that Mary, the Unloved, was dead, and that Elizabeth, the long-desired one, reigned in her stead.

No shout rent the air; and, above the strange wave of power, my lady seemed to see all the sadness that had departed ere her chance to bring release had come.

Almost fearfully, now that the opportunity had

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arrived, she dropped upon her knees, and said in Latin : “ It is the Lord’s doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes ! ”

And while she spoke, great crowds were gathering at Westminster. Tables were spread in the streets ; bells were being rung joyously, and the “ Te Deum ” was sounding in the churches. “ Thee, God, we praise ! ”

And, amid all the forgetfulness, Mary, poor, forgotten Mary, slept on, not caring whether the people praised God that she was dead, or that her sister reigned. After the sad, unsatisfied life, Katherine of Arragon’s daughter rested.

Well, we all know the reign of “ Good Queen Bess ; ” we need not follow, step by step, the path her royal feet once trod ; but ’tis sweet to stand by the roadside of that brilliant life, and, straining our eyes, try to catch a glimpse of her now and again.

Through the golden sunlight she travelled from Hatfield up to London town, stopping only once to rest at a place called Charter House. So impatient was she to take the sceptre in her hands that she knew no weariness or pain.

If my lady ever doubted that the English people loved her, the doubt fled that day.

Under arches she passed, while the bells rang, and the merry children sang. She smiled and

SHE COMES INTO HER OWN

waved her hands joyously to her people, for they were indeed her own at last.

On the journey, an old woman came from out the throng, and tossed a bit of rosemary to my lady. At that, the glad smile faded from the girlish lips.

“Rosemary for remembrance,” sighed Elizabeth. It was a token from a life almost ended to one just begun, and Elizabeth Tudor gave heed as she went up to the Tower to be crowned. Because she remembered, she would be just and kind!

The smile returned, and the princess nodded to the ancient dame.

But my lady did *not*, in that hour of exaltation, remember the cruel injustices of her life, so she did not feel that she would ever be cruel to others; had she so remembered and foreseen, the smile would not have returned so swiftly. She had yet to learn that.

And so she came to the Tower for her coronation.

Not into the Traitors’ Gate did she go, but into the grand entrance, and up to the chambers of state, with her golden head held high.

At her coming, bolts flew back, strong rusty bolts, and into the freedom of God’s holy sunshine walked pale shadows of men and women, and right loyally they bowed before their deliverer.

TOWER OR THRONE

Hark ! Over the distance of centuries we hear her firm voice almost pleadingly lifted to her ministers of state : “ You will not be corrupted with any gift, and you will be faithful to the state, and without respect to my will you will give me that counsel that you think best.”

Was ever a tenderer charge given by earthly queen than this, so pathetically spoken by Henry VIII.’s daughter Elizabeth ?

With the crowning of the queen, a plain gold ring was placed upon the slim white hand.

“ No other queen has done this thing ! ” murmured the astonished courtiers, but my lady had wedded her love, you know, as perhaps no other queen had ever done.

And now? — but now she is the queen ! The trumpeters are announcing the fact to the kingdom. She is “ My Faire Ladye ” no longer. Perchance we might not love her so well as Queen Elizabeth, and so, as the diadem presses her golden curls, let us bid her farewell.

THE END



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